
Boarding School Business: The Voices of Aboriginal Girls Attending Boarding Schools

Jessa Rogers

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this thesis contains only my original work, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text. This thesis does not exceed 100,000 words in length, exclusive of footnotes, tables, figures and appendices.

Jessa Rogers

Date: 10/10/2016

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| English interpretation of Māori terms..... | 11 |
| Aboriginal and Australian terms..... | 16 |
| Abstract..... | 19 |
| Chapter 1: Locating myself..... | 21 |
| Chapter 2: Boarding schools in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand | 37 |
| Chapter 3: Method and methodology | 67 |
| Indigenous research..... | 68 |
| Relatedness theory | 69 |
| Arts-based research | 72 |
| Developing the method: photoyarn..... | 73 |
| Developing a research plan | 85 |
| Chapter 4: College A | 91 |
| Gathering grasses | 92 |
| Preparing the fibres | 93 |
| Learning to weave | 100 |
| Weaving together | 111 |
| Data analysis | 115 |
| Finishing the dilly-bag | 128 |
| Chapter 5: College B..... | 131 |
| Gathering grasses | 131 |
| Preparing the fibres | 133 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Learning to weave | 134 |
| Weaving together | 136 |
| Data analysis..... | 151 |
| Finishing the dilly-bag..... | 155 |
| Chapter 6: College C | 159 |
| Developing kōreropikitia..... | 165 |
| Gathering the flax | 167 |
| Preparing the flax | 168 |
| Weaving the weft..... | 169 |
| Forming the weave | 171 |
| Data analysis..... | 172 |
| Finishing the kete | 186 |
| Chapter 7: Findings, successes and limitations..... | 187 |
| Conclusion | 223 |
| Appendix 1: Visual data theming from College A..... | 231 |
| Appendix 2: Visual data theming from College C..... | 233 |
| References | 243 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: The photoyarn method..... | 87 |
| Table 2: Themes and subthemes | 123 |
| Table 3: Textual data representing <i>contrast</i> theme and subthemes | 124 |
| Table 4: Textual data representing <i>connection</i> theme and subthemes | 125 |
| Table 5: Theming of images and text..... | 149 |
| Table 6: Textual examples of main themes, College B | 153 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 7: Themes from textual analysis, College C | 180 |
| Table 8: Themes from transcript analysis, College C | 184 |
| Table 9: Themes that emerged across all three sites: <i>The importance of cultural understanding and education</i> | 195 |
| Table 10: Themes that emerged across all three sites: <i>Boarding school forming deep friendships between Indigenous sisters, like a family</i> | 196 |
| Table 11: Themes that emerged across all three sites: <i>Boarding school being worth it in the end, or a pathway to a brighter future</i> | 197 |
| Table 12: Themes that emerged across all three sites: <i>Growth, new opportunities, the beginning of a new life</i> | 198 |
| Table 13: Themes that emerged across all three sites: <i>Restrictions, feeling trapped, isolated, stuck in the middle</i> | 199 |

LIST OF DRAWINGS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Drawing 1: Relatedness theory in this research | 70 |
| Drawing 2: Relatedness as the theoretical underpinning of this work | 229 |

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*ABORIGINALIZING METHODOLOGY:
CONSIDERING THE CANOE*

I know that you know how to act in someone else's home
where you are an invited guest not a tourist
so grab a paddle or rudder or line and keep time in indian time
and don't worry too much if there aren't sufficient references
to published materials or any at least in the first few bends

the means of transportation I have chosen for this article
as well as my doctoral dissertation
*First peoples' knowings as legitimate discourse in education: coming home to the
village*
besides language is a canoe
constructed not from the forest nations but from words
and the gesturings of those words and the spaces around those words
the idea of chapter is anathema to who I am as an indigenous person
it implies western order and format as "the" legitimate shapers of discourse
the universe being ordered into rationally constructed geometries...

perceptions of our perceptions making us take up the tools of the settlers...

the idea of paragraph is meaningless to my sense
of oral contiguousness with the land with community with acting in the world
it is a denunciation of the geography of my relationship with place
where are the plateaux the escarpments the end moraines the ridges and slopes
the practice of academically certified punctuation distances me
from my sense of space time and natural speech patterns including translated ones
separating me from my connection with the earth and its natural rhythms
the a priori presumption being that the written word is of paramount worth
the assumption being that the mechanisms of codification
and transliteration of our rhythms periods commas semicolons
have anything (whatsoever) to do with our paralinguistic choreographies
to thus delegate the orality of my nation and its transcription to a place removed
from equal symbolic even orthographic consideration
is to put us in our place illiterates illegitimates iterati...

this english language was forced onto my nation in residential school
and other places our languages were and are not "official"
have you ever seen a five year old girl with a pin (inserted) through her tongue
for speaking her language permission resides in me as languaged
to use this imposed english as I must otherwise it will use me at its discretion
forging me into molds of correct usage which would never do
insofar as my own agenda is concerned

english is one of the languages I was raised in
it is the language of my mother and my father knew it too
I allowed myself to be colonized by it unaware ssssss
in turn I have chosen to use it as I need to for my writing...

I am the written the languaged the read
and the "me" I speak of here at this cross-roads this node
this inter-section this confluence is one
which exists within as well as despite language
like a stone partly beneath the earth or water or sky partly above it
it is not that the stone is partly buried or submerged but that its relationship
with earth with water with air is not defined solely in terms of the preposition "above"

as a languaged person I do not acknowledge as ultimate authority
of how I am to express myself "correctly" using english
dictionaries lexicons grammarabilia
and other imported colonialist paraphernalia
who owns this language to whom is it deeded chartered
who has given the university the government the viceroy intendancy
over how documents are to be languaged over what counts
as legitimate discourse within a sanctioned institution of post-knowing
when this tool of conquerage this english was forced on us
we vowed to use it so as to communicate as best we were able
I set as my task to write for meaning rather than correctness
even at the risk of being misunderstood mis-taken
which is part of what language is all about - risk
negotiating meaning agency power relations

in order to enter those realms of anointed power
those racially predestined orbs those p/reserves of academ(ent)ia
those places where I can be of immediate help for my nation
it is deemed I am to follow western epistemologies
cast like the commandments of moses [or the manifesto of andré breton]
into petrified substantiation transited like retrograde orbiting planets
with us as indigenous peoples caught in the thrall...

this part of my article is an introduction but not to a beginning
to a continuation a continuing
with the transfer of these words from computer screen pencil pen...

the canoe comes from the forest and from place of mind spirit...

though it might seem the canoe and tree are from a conceptual space
they are from spirit and heart...

paper has long been the form whereon the academy has held the forest hostage
yet here too is a forest though not called so yet is
pulpd pressed flat between covers printed on in aisles and paginated
even so it is just that yet not just that even is it more...

a presence of not having been processed from tree dimension
into eight and a half by eleven a-4 plus or minus and its direct declensions...

our educational frameworks are not imported from conceptual spaces
or other western domains...

the anthropologists linguists historians indian expert educators
who have made careers out of studying us
and we could fulfill the mandate of referencing
by quoting them quoting us - but I will refrain...

in those days before the whiteman our individuality
was not the focus and resolve it is today
ex/cluivizing self from selves selves from self
life spindled spun and wove us together...

we follow our original instructions as orally passed on
as well as continually relearned in our ceremonies rituals daily protocols
we work to regenerate mutual relationships interpenetrating considerations
ethics for us is not an add-on or a form to fill in
it is intimate integration with the deep structure of our understanding
of creation including its ongoingness its pre- co- and post-emptiveness
our way is not to bioassay and reproduce mapped grids gradients
of the western research paradigms...

what about consideration for all our relations
what about love for each leaf tree stone student colleague...

what kind of ethic epistemology methodology what does it say
of the underlying motive of capitalism consumer fraud *ab origine*...

we assemble bit by bit the canoe giving thanks
in that place europhilosophy calls "conceptual space" t/here
I speak with the assembled tree nations to a particular tree
asking permission to use part of its clothing its body its spirit
as a vehicle for my journey of words ideas intentions actions feeling
as a companion
paddle paddle paddle

swoooooooooosshhh

(Cole 2002, p. 448-451)

INTRODUCTION

Despite the large number of Indigenous students who attend boarding schools, the experiences of Indigenous boarding school students are under-researched not only in Australia, but across the world. In response, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its sixth session recommended a comparative study on boarding school policies regarding indigenous peoples. The subsequent report explains:

As tools of cultural assimilation, boarding schools for the most part have infringed upon indigenous peoples right to self-determination. These schools have resulted in cultural alienation, loss of language, disruptions in family and social structures, and increased community dysfunction (Smith 2009, p. 49).

Smith's observations point to the need for further research into boarding schools, and the large literature gap that currently exists regarding Indigenous boarding experiences. Hodges, Sheffield and Ralph (2013) state that the few authors who have investigated Australian boarding schools have:

commented on the scarcity of relevant boarding-school research, both in Australia and overseas, and have also noted that what is available is often dated and exists as a less significant aspect of more general research into private education (p. 33).

With 4249 Indigenous Australian students attending boarding schools in Australia in 2015 (Boarding Australia, 2015a), the paucity of research regarding Indigenous boarding outcomes and most importantly, student voice concerning boarding school experiences led me the gap within which this work sits. My time teaching 30 Indigenous boarders at a secondary girls school in Brisbane inspired my original search for boarding school literature. I wished to know more about Aboriginal girls' boarding school experiences, from their perspective. When I could not find literature that centred student voice, I decided to pursue this research with Indigenous students.

I came to this research first and foremost as an Aboriginal woman, and, secondly, as an educator who continues to work with Indigenous students. This research is deeply connected to who I am and the lens through which I view the world. I brought to this research my personal history, my ancestry, my learnings and my experiences, driven by a desire to contribute to my community as will be further described in Chapter 1. I yarned with Aboriginal women, Aboriginal educators, mothers of Indigenous girls attending boarding schools, and Indigenous students. I spoke with Aboriginal women who had previously graduated from boarding school, and with women who did not complete their schooling after attending boarding schools. I also had informal conversations with many Aboriginal people who shared stories of people in their communities who had attended boarding school, including Indigenous leaders, both male and female. These yarns helped me gain an understanding of the boarding school experience from multiple perspectives, toward developing a research question meaningful to young women, their families and communities, as described in Chapter 3. The involvement of these individuals, while not described in detail in this thesis, is deeply valued and acknowledged.

This research does not sit within a Western discipline such as history, anthropology or sociology. While the data in this study could be interpreted through such disciplinary lenses, I researched with the underpinning awareness that I was intimately connected by blood, culture and collective experience, to the Aboriginal women I worked with. This work is Indigenous research. When working with Māori, our connections stemmed from our understandings of relatedness through indigeneity; although specific to place and country, these understandings connected us as First Peoples with ties to ancestors, land and spiritual aspects of being. Although the 35 participants and I came from many different nations, our relatedness as Indigenous women bound us together in this work. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori women:

are said to be within the “margin” or “marginal”. The dominant view, the Pakeha view, is “centred”... Similarly, within the Australia [sic] discourses of feminism and Australian identity, Aboriginal women are said to be within the “margin” (Fredericks et al. 2012, p. 4).

Existing within the ‘margins’ as Māori and Aboriginal women also increased our connection. Relatedness theory informed the research design, methodology and method in this work. This theoretical underpinning was enacted by following Indigenous research protocols, including reciprocity, the forming of respectful

relationships, the sharing of power and control of the research, and, most importantly, the empowerment aims of this research across the three school communities outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Relationships are core to all aspects of Indigenous life, including knowledges. Indigenous peoples do not view knowledges as property or in terms of ownership but rather in terms of ‘community and individual responsibilities... knowledge carries with it certain responsibilities to show respect for, and to maintain a reciprocal relationship’ (Battiste & Henderson 2000, p. 71-72). Relatedness theory is centred on the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, through relationships and connections, whether they be familial ties, relations between distant nations, connectedness through country or social relations. Reciprocity in knowledge sharing, relationships built on the balancing of community interests and concerns, as well as a focus on the need for communal decision-making all influenced this research, particularly the research plan and method.

Colleges A and College B were urban boarding schools, with Aboriginal boarders from numerous nations across Australia. As observed by McHugh and Kowalski (2009), it was clear that this study was not focused on a particular Aboriginal community, but rather, our Australian Aboriginal community was represented by the students boarding at Colleges A and B. In relation to the concept of community, I spoke with two Aboriginal elders, one local to College A and one local to College B, and asked for guidance on how we might best define the research community within this research. Both were of the view that at each college, the students and I should yarn together toward defining what community means, within the context of the group. McHugh and Kowalski (2009) note that Smith (1999) explains Aboriginal people can belong to ‘a number of different communities; these layers of belonging are often referred to as “nested identities”... [community is defined as] an intimate and self-defined space’ (p. 121). The concept of nested identities, is discussed further in Chapter 1.

In defining community, Aboriginal students at Colleges A and B yarned about what community means to them as Aboriginal boarders. Community has been defined as ‘a group of people living in the same defined area sharing the same basic values’ (Robertson & Minkler 1994, p. 303). At Colleges A and B, students recognised shared Aboriginality and shared living quarters in the boarding house as key to their sense of

their own community while at boarding school and suggested this would be their research community. Students, teachers and the school principal were also discussed as members of the school body, but were not included by students in their definition of the research community. Elders, too, while heavily connected to students in their home communities, were not present in College A or College B. As such, the students decided that elders, while deeply connected through relationships with individuals in the group, would not be considered a formal part of the research community. Harrison (2001) describes community as ‘any other group of indigenous people who consider that they are related as a community’ (p. 36). Allowing the students to define the research community ensured that the students and I had the same understanding of who would share their knowledges through this research at each college.

Battiste (2002) argues that the most vital principle of Aboriginal research is that Aboriginal people maintain control of their knowledges. The only real way to ensure that Aboriginal people are in control of research is to involve them in each stage and every part of research. Our research community was bound by our indigeneity and relatedness, with each individual forming a part of the whole. As Graham states, ‘it does not matter how Western and urbanised Aboriginal people have become... We believe that a person finds their individuality within the group’ (1999, p. 106). Battiste and Henderson state that Indigenous communities must consent to the sharing of knowledges in research, and that this sharing ‘creates a relationship between the givers and receivers... givers retain the authority to ensure that knowledge is used properly... receivers continue to recognize and repay the gift’ (2000, p. 71). In Indigenous research, decisions are made:

cooperatively (ordinarily by consensus) because no one family, allied nation, or skilled elite possesses all the relevant knowledge... decision making involves the sharing of specialized knowledge and the balancing of all interests and concerns... regulated through the social relationships among kinship groups and voluntary associations (Battiste & Henderson 2000, p. 68-69).

As with Aboriginal research, research for Māori people privileges Māori beliefs and knowledges, with the understanding that all elements of life are related and connected. Relatedness sits at the heart of Māori ways of being, with ‘relations being fundamental to Māori epistemologies’ (Bishop 2008, p. 441). For Māori:

knowledge is not a linear representation of facts. Rather it is a cyclical or circular representation that takes into account collective meanings; relations

between objective structures and subjective constructions; and temporal dimensions such as how meanings and relationships can change over time. As such, it is knowledge constituted by Indigenous reality, grounded within a specific socio-cultural context (Ruwhiu & Cathro 2014, p. 4).

Relationships formed the core of this work. Research with Aboriginal students in Australia, and Māori students in Aotearoa New Zealand, was underpinned by relatedness theory in the knowledge that, as indigenous peoples, relatedness is core to our ontologies.

I acknowledge freely that this thesis does not cover all aspects of the urban boarding school experience for Aboriginal young women in Australia and Māori women in Aotearoa New Zealand. The aim of this research was to uncover and listen to the voices of 35 Aboriginal and Māori girls currently attending boarding schools. The opportunity to hear these voices is essential in light of the negative history of boarding school education for Indigenous students. Outlined in Chapter 2, this historical context is discussed in order to contextualise the contemporary voices of students in this study.

‘Student voice’ has many definitions and applications. Student voice sits within the web of ‘school structures and cultures that are shaped by policymakers, school leaders, teachers, researchers and students’ (Bahou 2011, p. 2-3). The way in which student voice plays out in research and action is dependent on the project, the setting and the power of those involved in the research. The goal of student voice ultimately rests on student participants having the ability to harness power, through discussion, collaboration and action as students and co-researchers (de los Reyes & Gozemba 2002). When students are given opportunities to talk about their schooling, they experience a stronger sense of respect, self-worth and agency (Rudduck, Demetriou & Pedder 2003). They experience growth in self-confidence, social capital, research and critical thinking skills, as well as problem-solving skills (Zeldin, O’Connor & Camino 2006). As such, student voice positions students as:

agents of change. In this way, student voice is about agency. At its core, student voice is the antithesis of depersonalized, standardized, and homogenized educational experiences because it begins and ends with the thoughts, feelings, visions, and actions of the students themselves (Toshalis & Nakkula 2012, p. 23).

There is a great need for this research, in the face of such paucity of boarding school research in Australia, but particularly due to the silence of Indigenous student

voices in the literature. The secondary question of this thesis was how arts-based Indigenous research could amplify Indigenous student voices regarding their experiences of boarding school. Mitra (2009) explains that students have unique understandings and perspectives about their schools that teachers and adults do not. Their perspectives are essential in research about what works in boarding schools. Student voice is not just about giving students the ability to express their ideas and opinions; it is about providing them with power to influence change in their schools (West 2004). Activities that allow student voice to be amplified provide significant learning experiences for young people, especially for those students who do not usually find great meaning in their school experiences (Mitra 2004).

Manefield et al. (2007) explain that some young people are more willing to speak than others regarding their student experiences, and that often students are not able to speak up to those who hold power over what happens in schools. In response, informed by relatedness theory and student voice literature, I developed an Indigenous method called photoyarn, aimed at encouraging the expression and amplification of student voice as outlined in Chapter 3.

This thesis raises more questions than it provides answers. It is a culmination of student-led research. In centring student voice in this work, it was essential that I considered questions of whose voices were amplified, who was unable to speak, and who spoke for whom (Bahou 2011). I asked these questions in each stage of this research, and throughout the writing of this thesis. The voices I amplify are those of the girls who shared their experiences with me. There were many others who were unable to speak, including other Indigenous students in boarding schools, parents, teachers, principals and countless others. The question of who speaks for whom requires acknowledgement of my own voice, and perspectives, but not presuming to speak on behalf of the students who shared their own voices with me. I have used a variety of techniques, outlined in later chapters, to highlight the voices of the students in this research. In this thesis, student yarns appear in shaded boxes, so they are easier for the reader to identify. I have included student quotes, as well as transcriptions of group yarns written exactly as they were heard. In this way, the voices of individuals might be read as they were shared – some as individual yarns, others in yarning circles with groups of young women sharing their thoughts together with mixed emotions and energies.

This project did not seek to highlight individual voices; rather, it sought to gain a community perspective that students wanted to give voice to. As such, most comments are not identified with pseudonyms. Each voice was considered as important as the next, no matter who shared their comments. This thesis does not include student case studies, instead, the three boarding schools, Colleges A, B and C, frame the case studies of Chapter 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 7, as the concluding chapter in this thesis, is written from my perspective as an Aboriginal researcher. It outlines my own understandings of the student voices I heard as we researched together. My views are informed by the student voices I valued and centred in this process.

My voice throughout this thesis speaks in a variety of ways that are eclectic as the research tools and disciplinary borrowings throughout this work. I do not speak for those I research with, only as a passionate advocate for student voice and power within the schools in which they are stakeholders. In this thesis, to maintain my own position I write in first person, in English. English is my first language, as a result of my family's experiences with colonization. As Fredericks (2003) states, the use of English is a:

colonial discourse that has become hegemonic... Aboriginal peoples as a collective and Aboriginal women, have little choice but to use the same language with one another... I can speak no Aboriginal languages belonging to an Aboriginal nation. I cannot speak the language of my Aboriginal ancestors (p. 7).

I conducted this research in English, with some Māori concepts described in te reo Māori in the Māori setting. Māori terms used in the research process have also been maintained in te reo Māori throughout this thesis, in respect of their importance and relevance to this research and to the voices that used these terms. For those who speak English only, a table of English interpretations of the Māori concepts I use is included in the opening pages of this thesis. The meanings are listed as related to the words used in this work; the table does not include all the possible meanings of these terms.

As with Māori terms in Aotearoa New Zealand, I used Aboriginal English at times when speaking with Aboriginal participants. Each of the 25 Aboriginal participants in this study identified themselves as 'Indigenous', using terms including 'Murri', 'Koori', 'Black', 'Aboriginal,' and 'Indigenous,' as well as nations such as 'Wiradjuri' to describe their indigeneity. As such, some of these words are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. Each of the 10 Māori students described their

indigeneity using words such as ‘tangata whenua’, ‘Māori’, ‘Brown people’, ‘Pasifika’ ‘Indigenous’ and by tribal affiliations such as ‘Ngai Tahu’.

‘Indigenous’ was a term that students in this study felt comfortable using to describe their identity. This word is used throughout this thesis in reference to the 35 students across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. While the term ‘Indigenous’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian context, there were no Torres Strait Islander students among the 35 participants in this study, and I myself am Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander. Therefore, when the term ‘Indigenous’ is used to describe students in this work, this only includes Māori and Aboriginal young women. It is culturally appropriate in Australian contexts for the term Indigenous to be capitalised when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indigenous is written in lower-case when referring only to indigenous peoples who are not from Australia.

In summary, this thesis has seven chapters aimed at outlining the research question, methodology, process, results, findings, limitations and implications of this study. In Chapter 1 I introduce myself as researcher and provide information regarding my background, my experience, my pedagogy and, most importantly, my relational and cultural connections and affiliations. Chapter 2 provides a summary of available boarding school literature and an overview of the historical context of boarding schools in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It concludes with a discussion of how contemporary boarding school models function for Indigenous students, contextualising the study discussed in later chapters across the three boarding schools in this research. Chapter 3 illustrates the theoretical underpinning and design of the study. Relatedness theory and Indigenous research provide a rationale for the Indigenous methodology and method employed in this research. Chapter 3 also describes how the methodology was actioned through Indigenous research principles and practices, while describing the development of photoyarn as a method.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe the three boarding schools that formed the communities within this research. Each chapter outlines the religious and cultural ethos of the school, providing details about Indigenous enrolments, locality and other notable school features. Each case study outlines the research process, including major themes that emerged at each school. The process of data analysis and interpretation is outlined according to site. Chapter 6 forms the international Indigenous boarding

comparison that complements the study of Aboriginal girls boarding school experiences, which are the focus of this work. As such, I do not attempt to cover the Aotearoa New Zealand context in as much detail as the Australian context within this thesis. My intention was to provide a comparison that highlights both questions and potential answers regarding contemporary boarding experiences of Aboriginal girls in Australia. This case study was chosen as an example of indigenous boarding excellence, based on its extensive history providing quality education in indigenous boarding.

Chapter 7 is a discussion from my perspective as a researcher, drawing together the findings, themes and patterns that occurred across the three sites. This discussion draws on relevant literature regarding key issues discussed by students. It outlines the findings from across the three sites, summarising and discussing implications of the results, and making comment on the similarities and disparities across the three schools. It discusses the major themes in comparison to each school context.

One thesis alone cannot answer, or even introduce, all areas or key topics related to Indigenous girls boarding school experiences. Areas I acknowledge as highly relevant yet out of scope include, but are not limited to, racism in schools, the effect of racial discrimination on student outcomes, embedding Indigenous perspectives in curriculum, girls education, single-sex schooling, and social-emotional development of adolescent girls. While there is a large body of literature on gender theory, Indigenous education in day schools and a smaller body of literature on non-Indigenous boarding school experiences, there is a huge paucity of research into Indigenous boarding experiences, and even less on those specifically related to female students. This thesis I restate the fact that this work is centred on the voices of Indigenous girls currently attending boarding schools toward contributing to the gap that exists in current literature. As Indigenous research, my thesis amplifies the voices of Indigenous students, scholars, and community members, by drawing on non-academic but reputable sources such as published submissions and papers from Indigenous community organisations.

The data the students produced themselves is the centre of this thesis, and it is complemented by literature to contextualise the findings. As such, literature is woven throughout this thesis and does not sit within the regular framework of the literature

review chapter. The existing literature is positioned through relatedness, rather than categorising it as a separate chapter or part of this work.

The core research question asked by this thesis is: What can female Aboriginal student voices tell us about their contemporary boarding experiences in Australia? This question is also followed by two secondary questions: how can student voice be amplified through arts-based Indigenous research? Do Indigenous students in Aotearoa New Zealand have similar experiences while away from home at boarding school? While written specifically for those with an interest and understanding of Indigenous studies, Indigenous education and Indigenous research, this work is accessible by anyone interested in viewing Indigenous student experiences through this lens. That being said, the method developed in this work was designed for Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous students but is described in detail in order for non-Indigenous researchers to be able to access the way it functions and could work in collaborative research involving non-Indigenous co-researchers.

This thesis draws on academic literature, and Indigenous voices shared through newspapers, policy papers, media releases, community organisations, Indigenous bodies, representative committees and submissions to the Australian Government, as well as Indigenous students. This rich and wide scope of sources evoke Martin's (2008) reflection that as a researcher, I am 'sitting amongst the (research) stories. This is a form of deep listening that is, by nature intuitive, tacit and beyond the realm of consciousness and intellect....anchored in relatedness...prepare for the expansion of relatedness of existing Stories with the emerging research stories' (Martin 2008, p. 97).

ENGLISH INTERPRETATION OF MĀORI TERMS

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Ako | <i>To teach and to learn</i> |
| Aroha | <i>Love in its broadest sense, respect, hospitality, giving, to feel concern for</i> |
| Āhuetanga Māori | <i>Māori characteristics</i> |
| Atuatanga | <i>Teachings and ways of God, theology, ministry</i> |
| Harekeke | <i>New Zealand flax plant</i> |
| Hapū | <i>Smaller whānau groups within broader iwi, subtribes</i> |
| Hato Hōhepa | <i>Saint Joseph</i> |
| Hui | <i>Meeting, social gathering for discussion</i> |
| Iwi | <i>Nations, tribal group or affiliation</i> |
| Kai | <i>Food</i> |
| Kainga | <i>Community, home</i> |
| Kakahu | <i>Refers to Māori costume worn for kapa haka, clothing, cloak</i> |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Kanohi ki te kanohi | <i>Face-to-face</i> |
| Kapa haka | <i>Māori group performing arts</i> |
| Karakia | <i>Prayers, spiritual blessing</i> |
| Karanga | <i>Female ceremonial call of welcome onto marae</i> |
| Kaumatua | <i>Elders, male elder</i> |
| Kaupapa | <i>Shared vision or ambition, message</i> |
| Kete | <i>Woven Māori bag or basket</i> |
| Kōhanga Reo | <i>Māori language playgroup/preschool, full immersion early learning - “language nests”</i> |
| Kotahitanga | <i>Together as one, solidarity, unity</i> |
| Kōrero | <i>Speaking, conversation</i> |
| Kōreropikitia | <i>Picture-discussion</i> |
| Koru | <i>Spiral-shaped, unfurling silver fern frond, representing new life, growth, strength for Māori people</i> |
| Kowhaiwhai | <i>Red, black and white Māori patterns often found on the on rafters of wharenui of marae. Māori histories, as recorded by Māori.</i> |
| Kuia | <i>Female elder</i> |
| Kura | <i>School, learning place</i> |
| Mahi | <i>Work</i> |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Mana | <i>Honour, authority, prestige, reverence, respect one is given by others, status</i> |
| Mana wāhine | <i>Powerful and revered Māori women</i> |
| Manaakitanga | <i>Hospitality, compassion, generosity, kindness</i> |
| Manuhiri | <i>Visitor, guest</i> |
| Māoritanga | <i>Māori way of life</i> |
| Marae | <i>Sacred communal Māori meeting place</i> |
| Matua | <i>Uncle, senior male</i> |
| Mauri | <i>Māori centre, the spirit of Māori knowledge at the heart of Māori</i> |
| Mihi | <i>Speech of acknowledgement or greeting</i> |
| Ngā Manu Kōrero | <i>National Aotearoa New Zealand Māori secondary schools speech competition – ‘the birds that speak’, also, an orator.</i> |
| Pā | <i>Father</i> |
| Pākehā | <i>Person of European descent, non-Indigenous</i> |
| Pao | <i>Dance or song for entertainment</i> |
| Pikitia | <i>Picture</i> |
| Poroporoaki | <i>Speech of farewell</i> |

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|----------------|---|
| Pōwhiri | <i>Traditional Māori welcoming ceremony onto marae</i> |
| Rangatira | <i>Leader, chief</i> |
| Rangatiratanga | <i>Leadership, sovereignty, domain of the rangatira</i> |
| Raranga | <i>Māori weaving</i> |
| Tangata whenua | <i>People of the land, First Peoples of Aotearoa</i> |
| Tamāhine | <i>Daughter</i> |
| Tāniko | <i>Māori weaving pattern, with culturally significant patterns</i> |
| Taonga | <i>Treasures, special Māori objects, both physical and non-physical</i> |
| Tapu | <i>Sacred, spiritually set apart, unclean in some contexts</i> |
| Te reo Māori | <i>Māori language</i> |
| Tikanga Māori | <i>Cultural protocols and practices, Māori way of doing things</i> |
| Tupuna | <i>Ancestor, ancestors</i> |
| Turangawaewae | <i>Tūranga (standing place) waewae (feet): places where one feels empowered and connected; foundation or place in the world</i> |
| Wahine | <i>Woman</i> |
| Waiata | <i>Song, singing</i> |
| Wairua | <i>Spirit</i> |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Whaea | <i>Aunty</i> |
| Whaea Atawhai | <i>Sisters, the term used for the boarding aunties at Hato Hōhepa</i> |
| Whaikōrero | <i>Speech at social gathering</i> |
| Whakairo | <i>Māori carving, patterns</i> |
| Whakapapa | <i>Genealogies, bloodline, ancestry, ways by which people come into relationship with the world, with people, and with life, stories of creation</i> |
| Whakataukī | <i>Māori proverbs, sayings</i> |
| Whakawhiti / whitiwhiti kōrero | <i>To convey a message through speaking to another, a conversation</i> |
| Whakawhiti whakaaro | <i>To convey thoughts, ideas, plans</i> |
| Whānau | <i>Close family, extended family, relatives</i> |
| Whanau tangata | <i>The wider community</i> |
| Whānau whanui | <i>Broader community, school community of College C</i> |
| Whanaungatanga | <i>Relationships, kinship, connection</i> |
| Whenua | <i>Land</i> |
| Whiri whenu | <i>Twisted bunches of harakeke thread</i> |

ABORIGINAL AND AUSTRALIAN TERMS

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Aunty | <i>Female elder, sometimes referring to mother's sister, a respected older woman sometimes related by blood</i> |
| Abo's | <i>Highly offensive, derogatory term used toward Aboriginal Australians</i> |
| Bangarra | <i>Aboriginal dance company</i> |
| Black | <i>Referring to an Aboriginal or Indigenous Australian, indigeneity</i> |
| Community | <i>Referring to Aboriginal people as a collective. Can refer to the entire Australian Aboriginal population, or a specific group related through location or relationships.</i> |
| Country | <i>One's home, the land one belongs to, the area of an Aboriginal person's genealogy, geographical area traditionally to which a language or tribe belongs</i> |
| Cultural/ceremonial business | <i>Aboriginal cultural activities and ceremonies</i> |
| Culture | <i>Referring to Aboriginal ways of being, doing and knowing. Aboriginality. The way Aboriginal people express their understanding of who they are.</i> |

Dreaming

Spirituality or beliefs, law and lore, refers to the spirit that encompasses an Aboriginal person's beliefs and guidelines for living, stories, songs, dances, relations between spiritual and physical world including connection between a person and country.

Cathy Freeman

Famous Aboriginal runner

Eurocentric

Referring to someone or something that is not focused on Aboriginal ways of being, doing and knowing, but rather the White way of doing, being or knowing

European

Non-Indigenous, white

Growing up/ to grow up

To raise or rear, generally used when describing bringing up children

Jessica Mauboy

Famous Aboriginal singer

Koori/Koorie

Aboriginal people from South-Eastern quarter of mainland Australia, including New South Wales, Victoria. Sometimes used to refer to Aboriginal person.

Murri

Aboriginal people from North-Eastern area of Australian mainland. Aboriginal people from Queensland. Sometimes used to refer to an Aboriginal person.

Nations

Aboriginal tribes, language groups, land areas.

Pale, pale-skin/skinned

Aboriginal person with skin that is not noticeably dark

A term for Aboriginal people removed by force from their families, by the government and religious organisations. Also refers to this period of time, from the late 1800s to mid 1960s when missions and homes for children stolen from their families existed.

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| Shame | <i>Embarrassment, shyness, usually caused by unwanted attention</i> |
| Shame job | <i>Something that causes embarrassment, “how embarrassing!”</i> |
| Sorry Day | <i>26 of May. National Australian date marking the pain and sorrow of Australian policies of forced child removal and the destruction they caused to Australian Indigenous peoples</i> |
| Sorry business | <i>Death, grieving and funeral practices</i> |
| Talk up to | <i>Speaking up, Indigenous people taking a stance of resistance</i> |
| Western | <i>Non-Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing based on European ways</i> |
| White | <i>Non-Indigenous</i> |
| Yarn/yarning | <i>Aboriginal way of conversation</i> |

ABSTRACT

Internationally, there is a paucity of research concerning boarding school experiences of Indigenous peoples (Smith 2009). Few studies have primarily addressed Indigenous girls' experiences in contemporary boarding schools in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand. This research was developed to amplify the voices of Indigenous girls regarding their contemporary boarding school experiences. This work sits within Indigenous studies, and reflects the multidisciplinary nature of Indigenous research. Drawing on Indigenous research methodologies, arts-based research and education, this study looks at two Australian boarding schools and includes a comparison with one Indigenous boarding school in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In order to centre Indigenous student voices, I developed a new Indigenous method termed photoyarn. Photoyarn was developed with the aim of highlighting Indigenous voices in research, specifically toward providing Indigenous students with a culturally sound, relevant method they could use to drive and control their own research, about their own experiences. Photoyarn is an Indigenous method involving student photography, yarnning circles and individual yarns. Photoyarn was modified for use in Aotearoa New Zealand to *kōreropikitia*, a method that involves digital photography, student journals and hui.

Participants at each of the three boarding school sites conducted their own thematic analysis on the data they gathered. Findings showed that female Aboriginal boarding students experience homesickness, identity and behavioural changes, and changed perceptions of their home communities. Indigenous Australian boarding school students experienced racism from non-Indigenous students as well as school staff, and Aboriginal students in the study identified cultural content in classes (or lack thereof) as isolating and upsetting. Māori students identified that homesickness was softened by the cultural familiarity of the Indigenous boarding school practices and family-based education structure of their college. All students noted that the

experiences of boarding school created family-like relationships between Indigenous boarders. Australian students identified the clash between home and school expectations, as well as the responsibilities of home and culture not being congruent with the structures of boarding school; and spoke of these incongruences as being difficult to navigate.

My Aboriginality, life experiences, teaching and artistic practices and my personal pedagogy influenced this study in many ways. The relatedness of the Indigenous young women in this study with myself as researcher was essential in building relationships, which underpinned, shaped and encouraged the expression of student voice in this research.

CHAPTER 1

Locating myself

My name is Jessa Rogers. My family was and is affected by forced child removal and adoption over several generations. My mother was adopted at birth by a non-Indigenous couple, later raised in Cootamundra, New South Wales before moving to Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, on Ngunnawal country. My mother reconnected with our Aboriginal family when I was in early primary school, and I have known myself to be an Aboriginal person since I was a young child. These events, places and personal histories form important parts of my identity.

In describing myself as an Aboriginal person, it is important for me to define my understanding of Aboriginality and indigeneity. The core of my understanding is that my identity and connection to country cannot be broken, regardless of colonisation, removal or separation from family and place: ‘Our relation to land, what I call ontological belonging, is omnipresent’ (Moreton-Robinson 2003, p. 24). My sense of belonging incorporates an awareness of my connection to other Aboriginal people, through blood, but also through a mutual belonging to land. As Moreton-Robinson (2003) states:

Our ontological relationship to land, the ways that country is constitutive of us, and therefore the inalienable nature of our relation to land, marks a radical, indeed incommensurable, difference between us and the non-Indigenous... this has not diminished the ontological relationship to land... [it] cannot be erased by colonizing processes (Moreton-Robinson 2003, p. 31).

Yindjibarndi woman Katie West describes struggles that resonate with my own:

Government policies synonymous with the Stolen Generations denied us the right to directly inherit this knowledge and identity... This, of course, impacted my sense of self and I became anxious about where my place

was... [I] was forced to look at my own position in the scheme of trans-generational trauma... I was still disconnected from my grandmothers' country... and the kinship connections that made this community... The issue I have struggled with most... is the idea that I have no culture. I felt I didn't have a cultural framework or coherent belief system to draw from. This is an idea that originates in the grand plan of assimilation – disconnect people from their culture, and then they have no culture. This in reality is not possible. Every person is a cultural being. I may have missed out on being born into Yindjibarndi society, but this does not mean my identity isn't authentic or valuable... The past cannot be changed, but we can reorient our presence in time and place (West 2016).

I have always considered my identity and the identity of other Aboriginal people as multifaceted. Indigenous peoples, according to Frideres (2008):

choose to identify in a variety ways...a fragmentation of identities and allegiances is possible. One way to reconcile this fragmentation of identities is to conceptualize a person's orientation to different groups (e.g., identity), as being nested. Thus one can identify with and hold allegiance to smaller communities (e.g., ethnic groups), while nested within a larger community...Aboriginal people do not make up a single-minded monolithic entity, speaking with one voice. They spring from many nations and traditions (p. 314).

Underpinned by an understanding of the relatedness of all aspects of life, the concept of nested identities is embedded within Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing, for not only Aboriginal Australians but Indigenous peoples around the world who continue to live in more than one world, cultural or otherwise. Warry (2007) explains:

We can speak of individual, group and cultural identities, which are intertwined with one another. We each have a nested layer of such identities that helps orient us to others in the world. A person is a mother, daughter, spouse, teacher...all at the same time. Schools, neighbourhoods, workplaces, cities and our nation act as reference groups...languages and culture are intimately connected, but not synonymous. Those Aboriginal people who no longer speak their language sustain their Aboriginal identity...it is just as possible, and happens regularly in Aboriginal contexts, for parents who were forbidden from speaking their language in residential schools to encourage their children to learn it (p. 99).

As described, Indigenous peoples continue to re-claim their identities by learning their language, histories and cultures. This has been my own experience, having to re-claim my identity after my family line was broken by adoption and child removal. While some Aboriginal people are born into families with unbroken knowledge of country, language and culture, I was not. As with my own ancestors, many Indigenous Australians were:

stolen from their families and placed in institutions or adopted by white families... colonization produced multiple contexts that shaped the construction of Indigenous subjectivities... policies of removal transferred different Indigenous peoples from their specific country to another's. This dislocation in effect means that Indigenous people can be out of place in another's country but through cultural protocols and the commonality of our ontological relationship we can be in place but away from our home country (Moreton-Robinson 2003, p. 33).

My adulthood has seen me retracing the footsteps of my family to find answers to who I am, but also has led me on a journey to understand what it means to be an Aboriginal woman in my own life. Martin explains, 'To know your stories of relatedness is to know who you are...Whether these Stories have been distorted or forgotten, they still exist...the task becomes one of finding how this happened in order to reclaim them' (2008, p. 83).

I have called many places home, but I have no lived experience on my own country. This however, does not affect my sovereignty as an Indigenous woman, and my Aboriginality forms the core of my identity, informed by my relationships with other Aboriginal people, my understanding of our ontology as Aboriginal people and knowledges shared with me by elders. As West (2016) describes, the process of finding one's identity in the face of intergenerational trauma is confusing, difficult and painful; with past, present and future as inseparable as our indigeneity and connection to country, regardless of colonial destruction.

My work in this thesis was influenced by my own identity, understandings of indigeneity and passion to work for improvement in Indigenous education. As an Aboriginal woman I understand that I am inextricably connected to other Aboriginal people, and country:

Indigenous women perceive themselves to be an extension of the earth, which is alive and unpredictable. Hence their understanding of themselves, their place and country also reflect this view. In their life histories Indigenous women perceive their experiences and others' experiences as extensions of themselves... beyond the immediate family (Moreton-Robinson 2003, p. 34).

My connection to the Aboriginal students in this study was of a personal nature, because of our shared ontology. My connection with the Māori students in this study grew from our shared indigeneity, and spiritual connection to land and all other aspects of life. Although this research always maintained a focus on the collective, each person's identity was 'unique to the individual and their life history: some have always identified as Aboriginal, others have found an Aboriginal identity in later life,

some experience identity questioning episodes’ (Bolt 2009, p. 114). The multifaceted nature of our research communities reflected the nature of Aboriginal and Māori culture in general, different from each place and space to the next but collectively bound by common values, principles, histories and experiences.

The histories of my ancestors are strong threads in the fabric of my identity. Shame is something I have grappled with growing up as a pale-skinned Aboriginal person connecting with community in adulthood living in urban spaces. Indigenous scholar Bolt (2009) states that rather than criticising urban Aboriginal identities, people should respect ‘Aboriginal people for “who they are” (essentially they are products of colonisation, of mixed heritage, of several cultural influences, but...strongly claim an Aboriginal identity)’ (p. 163). Those who do not have traditional Aboriginal identities, such as myself, are sometimes described as having an urban Aboriginal identity:

[The] urban Aboriginal identity concept is highly influenced by socialisation in an urban Aboriginal community, it is the elements of culture to which participants are exposed that become the resources used to achieve authenticity as Aboriginal people. Thus, socialisation is much more important than descent, simply because an Aboriginal identity is learnt, requiring socialisation processes. This is where the worldview has an integral role, because the urban Aboriginal identity concept is constructed from exposure to the Aboriginal worldview (Bolt 2009, p. 181).

Socialisation with Aboriginal members of local communities in which I have lived has formed my identity as an Aboriginal person. I learned who I am as an Aboriginal woman through conversations with elders, through continued shared experiences with other Aboriginal people, and through stories and histories of my people. Who I am by birth, which refers to my Aboriginal ontology, can never be changed. Being Aboriginal is something I was born into, but the journey of reclaiming my identity has been difficult at times, growing up in urban spaces. Like me, many ‘Indigenous women – Māori and Indigenous Australian – now live in urban, peri-urban and regional centres. We pass through, dwell and live within tribal areas belonging to others... regardless of whether buildings, shops, houses and services have been built there...’ (Fredericks et al. 2012, p. 5), but our connection to country is always present (Fredericks 2010). Kwaymullina explains that no matter where we are, ‘For each of us, our country is not just where we live, but who we are’ (2008, p. 7). These knowledges inform my understanding of who I am in relation to others, including the Indigenous students in this study.

While the Aboriginal young women involved in this study did not personally live through the period of time referred to as the Stolen Generations, many mentioned the Stolen Generations in their yarns, marking the:

trans-generational impact of the stolen generation which is significant because it shows that personal experience of a phenomenon is not necessarily required to become a prominent element of identity. It shows, rather, that the story of marginalisation of Aboriginal people, as told by 'significant others' is enough to become a significant event that warrants retelling (Bolt 2009, p. 155).

Such events continue to live on in Aboriginal young people. These shared histories function as painful bonds that join us as Aboriginal people together. As Niezen (2002) explains, Indigenous people:

derive much of their identity from histories... forced settlement, relocation, political marginalization, and various formal attempts at cultural destruction... The collective suffering that transposes onto identity is usually multigenerational. It can be separated by the space of decades, perhaps even centuries, from the immediate horrors of dispossession and death, kept alive by stories... to be recalled later, like the rekindling of smouldering ashes (p. 13-14).

My connections to the Indigenous women in this study gave me insights that an outsider may not have been able to access. I recognise these connections as influencing my 'determination and motivation to study the population, which indeed shapes the analytical process and consequently the findings or results of the study' (Bolt 2009, p. 81). Some use the term 'Insider research' to describe research where a researcher has a direct connection to the research setting (Robson 2002). This term has also been defined as research involving researchers who 'identify themselves principally with the ethnicity and/or gender of the students they study' (Foley, Levinson & Hurtig 2000, p. 37) and as 'research with communities or identity groups of which one is a member' (Kanuha 2000, p. 440). Such definitions go some way toward describing my involvement in this research, however for Indigenous people this connection goes much further, as mentioned, to being collective parts of the one whole, connected by an unbreakable belonging to country.

Being an Aboriginal person informed all aspects of this research. My methodology was based on Aboriginal ontology and relatedness, which influenced all aspects of this research from choice of method, methodology and theory; to the following of research practices that aligned with principles and protocols of research with Indigenous communities. I have been taught that as Aboriginal people, we have a

responsibility to give back, and to work for the betterment of other Indigenous peoples. An elder described this to me as ‘take what you need, give what you can’. As an educator, this research is what I can give. This chapter is a way for me to locate myself, so the reader might understand more of where I am coming from, and for Indigenous readers to position me and my connections to others including students within this work.

My educational journey started in Canberra, where I commenced kindergarten at 4 years of age. Six months into kindergarten, my parents commenced home schooling as we travelled for six months in a campervan, travelling through NSW, the Northern Territory (NT), South Australia and Queensland. On our return, my family relocated to regional Queensland, where I started primary school the next year. Five years later, my parents decided I would recommence home schooling while we stayed in the NT. Returning to the Sunshine Coast in Queensland for high school, I received a scholarship to attend a local co-educational private college, where I completed secondary schooling. My graduation in November 2002 also marked the birth of my first son. Completing my senior year out of home while pregnant, after being told I could not stay at home by my father, tested my determination. It also inspired me to work with Indigenous students and at-risk students, and particularly towards achieving an education.

As a young mother, university represented the possibility of financial security which I wanted for my baby son. I decided to pursue creative arts teaching, and applied for university in Brisbane, 100 kilometres south of my home on the Sunshine Coast. For several years, I made train trips between the university and my home, before I moved to Brisbane to complete my degrees. I graduated from Queensland University of Technology in 2008 with a Bachelor of Education (First Class Honours) and Bachelor of Creative Industries (with Distinction). Graduating represented something much greater than the opportunity to get a good job to pay for my family. It represented the fact that I could make change in my own life, and control my own destiny. Education became a powerful tool in my life, not for the things it could bring to me, but for how it could be used to create powerful change in the lives of others.

The year after I gained teaching qualifications, I took a contract teaching creative and performing arts at a Brisbane Catholic primary school. I taught a number of Aboriginal students in this time, and I noticed the importance of the work an

Indigenous education officer was doing supporting students culturally, emotionally and academically. When my contract ended, I searched for a role supporting Indigenous students and in 2010 accepted a position as Indigenous support officer at a secondary girls' boarding school in Brisbane. In this role I had the opportunity to work with elders, families and communities in Queensland, NSW, NT and Victoria, and to form strong connections with Indigenous education networks around Australia. My work with Indigenous boarders was challenging, yet incredibly rewarding. My own lived experiences helped me immensely when working with difficult and upsetting situations, but the most valuable aspect of this part of my journey was working closely with a local elder who led me in my own understanding of what it meant for me to be an Aboriginal young person.

In 2010, six months into my work as Indigenous support officer I was named National Youth of the Year by the National and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC). At 24 years of age, this was the most important honour I had ever received, because it was from my Aboriginal community. The award opened my life to many opportunities, especially to share my story of how education changed my life. I spent my weekends travelling to communities around Australia speaking to Indigenous youth while continuing work at the boarding school during the week. I learned much from those I spoke with, especially about their challenges and successes with education in Australian schools. These journeys also showed me some of the deep challenges of rural and remote communities and the issues that youth in particular were facing.

Late in 2010 my position at the boarding school changed, and I was re-employed on a new contract as a classroom teacher, teaching social science, creative arts and pastoral care classes, as well as coordinating the Indigenous student program for the 30 Indigenous girls attending the boarding school. During my time leading this program, I saw firsthand the necessity for cultural and social-emotional student support for Indigenous boarders. I also felt I needed greater skills to support the students. After many yarns with the school elder, I decided to commence my postgraduate studies in education toward gaining qualifications as a school guidance counsellor, in order to better meet the needs of the Indigenous students I was working with. I completed a Master of Education (Guidance and Counselling) focusing on

Indigenous students and a Certificate IV in Life Coaching in 2013. During this time I took six months of maternity leave, after giving birth to my second son.

When I returned from maternity leave to my teaching role, the boarding house had been closed. The Indigenous student program had also been restructured, now focused on literacy and numeracy, with a significantly reduced cultural activities program, under the coordination of a new, non-Indigenous coordinator. This was a huge loss that affected me personally, and is still one of the most painful career experiences I have faced. I spent much time resisting, but also knowing it might be time for me to move on from the role and students I loved. I felt a strong pull to return to the Sunshine Coast, Queensland where I had completed my own schooling and where my mother was living. I resigned from the school and I received my first lecturing position, in Indigenous education at the University of the Sunshine Coast, with a part-time role supporting Indigenous students in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education centre.

My first experience lecturing in a tertiary setting was daunting, and developing a pilot course was challenging for me as an inexperienced lecturer. Teaching fourth-year initial teacher education students extended my understanding of the needs of both Indigenous students, and non-Indigenous teachers who teach Indigenous students in a variety of educational settings. As one of only a handful of Indigenous lecturers, I became aware that my position in academia was one of contention, and one I needed to earn in order to gain credibility. My educational mentors recommended I undertake a PhD toward this aim.

I had travelled infrequently to Canberra in a volunteer capacity with Reconciliation Australia over the previous 12 months, and each time I had felt a strong personal connection and spiritual tug when I was there. Before I enrolled in my PhD, I visited Canberra alone and took some time on Ngannawal country by a river, listening for direction. I felt a strong connection, and a sense that I was to return to Canberra, my birthplace. I felt I was to complete my PhD in Canberra, and relocated to Canberra alone to complete my education at the Australian National University, living in student accommodation that closely resembled the boarding quarters of the school I had taught at in Brisbane. My sons remained at home in Queensland, in the care of their extended family, including my mother, and I would travel home every few weeks to see them. While the move from Queensland and the experience of living in student

accommodation was extremely difficult, it gave me a perspective on boarding that I had not previously had, in an embodied way. I gained the experience of living away from family and community, and I experienced severe homesickness, feelings of isolation, cultural disconnection and anxiety as a result.

My experiences as a teacher, lecturer and student are bound with my life experiences. Inseparable from one another, they are sewn together by the thread of education. As with most people, I cannot remember much of my life before I started school. Further, since starting kindergarten, I have not had a time in my life when I was not engaged in education, either as an educator, or as a student. This PhD journey is another stitch in the tapestry created by education in my life so far. This tapestry represents my pedagogy, which is framed by my identity as an Aboriginal educator.

I will briefly share some of my educational experiences, and my personal pedagogy, for without this my biases in this research might not appear to have been considered. Prior to my postgraduate studies, I was an undergraduate student and pre-service teacher. As an Aboriginal student, I remember often feeling invisible in my lectures and tutorials. I wondered how, and why, the preparation I was receiving to teach in Australian schools often failed to include mention of our First Peoples in the many and varied groups of students identified as worthy of attention and time through discussions, readings, assessment tasks, observations and learning experiences. My teacher education highlighted, in interesting and respectful ways, gifted and talented students, international students, students for whom English is a second language, and students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. In my entire education degree, I learned very little about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, peoples or cultures, but in the final year of my degree, an online course was added to our prescribed course progression, solely focused on Indigenous students. Requiring one textbook, with assessment through an essay and online discussion, the course was delivered online with no face-to-face interaction. Although excited to finally see Indigenous education included in my degree, I found the online delivery perplexing, as oral histories, relationships and stories are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As an Aboriginal educator working in the field almost a decade later, it is still my experience that many teachers feel underprepared to teach Indigenous students. In truth, many are. I have seen teachers in schools who not only lack knowledge about

Indigenous cultures and histories, but also lack knowledge about their own Indigenous students. My own experiences of university are representative of the kind of Australian education many teachers received in the past, both in high school and while training as teachers. As Herbert (2012) states, ‘not all teacher education programs produce teachers who are able to engage effectively with all students, especially with Indigenous students’ (p. 47). Many Australian teachers were educated in a system that denied students the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal histories, languages, cultures and peoples. As such, the Australian education system has produced a workforce of teachers who have little understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students they teach. As Rose (2012) asks, ‘how well-equipped will teachers be, given that they themselves are likely to have been deprived of valid Indigenous perspectives during their studies in compulsory and tertiary years?’ (p. 67).

With 200, 563 Indigenous students attending school in Australia in 2015 (ABS, 2015), it is highly likely that every Australian teacher will teach an Indigenous student at some point during their career. Rose (2012) explains, in the:

absence of personal and collective access to authentic Indigenous knowledge, intellectual hegemony prevails. When substantive misconceptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are held unknowingly by professionals their ignorance translates into professional advice and practice that misguides and marginalizes (p. 75).

My personal pedagogy rests firmly on the understanding that as a teacher I have a duty to find out who my students are. This is informed by my understanding that life is experienced through the social, contextual and spiritual relationships we have (Moreton-Robinson 2014). This makes the relationships I have, as a teacher with Indigenous students, so important. Relationships go further than attendance, retention and attainment. I cannot hope to improve my students’ knowledge of English literacy, numeracy or any other type of knowledge if I do not have solid, respectful relationships that inform my practice.

When Indigenous students attend boarding schools, their personal and familial relationships are stretched across long and wide distances. Such settings, without effective cultural and social support, can present great challenges, which I personally observed while teaching in a boarding school. Researchers working in Indigenous education ‘have continually highlighted the importance of the quality of engagement between the teacher and the student as having the most profound effect on success’ (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

[MCEETYA] 2006, p. 25). Partington, Gray and Byrne (2008) state that effective teachers of Aboriginal students are warm and friendly, set high standards, are willing to engage in culturally diverse environments, challenge resistant attitudes and build supportive structures. MCEETYA (2000) explains:

Integral to engagement is relationships: teachers with students, teachers with each other, teachers with parents, the school with the community, students with students and the student with the curriculum. A safe and supportive school/community environment gives a greater chance of success... Ideally this environment will reflect care, respect and concern for the needs of others in the everyday practices of students, educators and administrators (p. 3).

Teachers of Indigenous boarding students have a special role. Their teaching, however, is deeply influenced by the relationships they form with students, their families and communities. Palmer states:

In every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood—and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning (Palmer & Scribner 2007, p. 104).

When I started teaching, I knew that connecting to my students through the relationships I formed with them was important. I did not realise that this also relied on my knowledge of *myself* as a person. It actually went much further than my teaching skills or educational practice. Knowing myself more deeply a few years into my teaching career taught me how to look at myself properly. Examining my inner life has become integral to my practice as an educator, because I understand now that what I see is filtered through my own perceptions, opinions and worldviews. These skills also assisted me in reflecting on myself as a researcher. Palmer (1997) explains that ‘we teach who we are’ (p. 1). Who I am, is an Aboriginal woman. Although knowing myself to be Aboriginal from childhood, my understanding of my own identity constantly grows as I learn more about myself, through relationships and through community. Harris, Carlson and Poata-Smith explain:

Colonialism has restructured indigenous communities to such an extent that many individuals only become aware of their indigeneity later in their lives. Over time, many have sought to re-establish those social and cultural connections (2013, p. 6).

As a first-year teacher, I was not truly aware of my own worldview, but I did recognise that my biases impacted my practice. I learned in my first teaching roles it

was actually who I was that had the most impact on what I taught and how I taught. Palmer (1997) explains ‘when I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are... when I cannot see them clearly I cannot teach them well’ (p. 2). The personal worldview of a teacher has a significant impact on how they teach, through the informal curriculum. Rose (2012) explains that the informal curriculum ‘includes the amount of time that the educator gives a particular topic; or non-verbal signs of approval or disapproval; or the cultural background of the teacher who allows only one world view’ (Rose 2012, p. 77). Teachers have their own beliefs, biases and ways of viewing knowledge. This informs what they think is valuable to teach students, the way they expect students to behave and learn, what they consider success, and how they view the role of schooling in our world.

Teacher beliefs about Aboriginal students, and Indigenous knowledges, impact on their practice and on the way they teach Aboriginal students. This is seen through teacher expectations, the way they treat Aboriginal students, the content and resources they use, and the way they include Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum. These are important considerations of the boarding school experience for Aboriginal students, especially when teachers are underprepared or lacking knowledge about Indigenous ways of being, and the needs of Indigenous students. More than English literacy and numeracy teaching strategies, understanding the conditions needed for Indigenous students to feel comfortable, included and safe in Australian classrooms is essential before good learning can take place. Swan and Raphael (1995) identified a set of factors central to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These were high self-esteem and self-confidence; freedom to communicate needs and feelings; the ability to love and be loved; a sense of belonging to family and community; the ability to cope with stress; being able to relate, create and assert oneself; having options for change that help the development of a problem-solving approach; being comfortable with their environment; and believing in something (family, community, culture, religion or others) (p. 17). Similarly, Osborne, Baum and Brown (2013) argue that positive classroom conditions for Indigenous students include having high expectations, challenging assumptions of low Indigenous achievement, having a focus on community development, collaborating with community, promoting positive Indigenous identity, whole-school approaches to

improving outcomes, high-quality teachers, positive school environment and the inclusion of Indigenous cultures and knowledges in the school curriculum.

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories have not in the past been included in integrated ways in Australian education, however states and territories have taken steps toward greater embedding of Indigenous perspectives in school curricula over recent years. The Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools (EATSIPS) framework (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training 2008) explains that teaching about Indigenous cultures and perspectives ‘in schools has been identified nationally as key to improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives will enhance the educational experiences of non-Indigenous students as well’ (p. 9). Until recently, each Australian state and territory held responsibility for what was taught in state and territory schools. In response to the issues caused by such as system, the Australian Government, with national consultation and review, developed the Australian Curriculum.

In 2014, the Australian Curriculum was rolled out in all Australian states and territories, providing 15 senior secondary Australian Curriculum subjects, including English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography. The Australian Curriculum was written to equip students with the ‘skills, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to engage effectively with and prosper in a globalised world. Students will gain personal and social benefits, be better equipped to make sense of the world in which they live...’ (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2015). As such, the Australian Curriculum gives special attention to three priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia; and sustainability. These cross-curriculum priorities are intended to be present throughout all subject areas, and across year levels, however they are not formally assessed. ACARA states that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority provides:

opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. This knowledge and understanding will enrich their ability to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia (ACARA 2014b).

The inclusion of Indigenous content in classroom teaching has been shown to improve the educational success of Indigenous students in schools (Queensland

Government Department of Education and Training 2008). Embedding Indigenous content (rather than teaching Indigenous studies as a separate unit or discrete course) encourages respect, relationships and knowledge production between non-Indigenous and Indigenous students, and Indigenous content is seen as part of the everyday business of learning. Indigenous learning experiences that are separate from the regular curriculum exclude Indigenous knowledges as something non-vital or removed from important, regular classroom content.

The discussion so far in this chapter was intended to give the reader an insight to my personal experiences and ways of viewing education. These informed the way I approached this research, and understood the students who researched alongside me. This research was deeply moving and personal for me, because through socialisation, I learn about myself when I learn about other Aboriginal women:

Indigenous identities are reflexively produced and depend as much upon the recognition of others as they do on the self-designations and self-attributions we assert during the course of social interaction with others. Rather than constituting a unified, fixed and unchanging construct, Indigenous identities are, therefore, always in flux; they are a response to shifting and diverse social and cultural categories and identifications that are rarely stable. In this sense, Indigenous identities are emergent, a process of becoming rather than being (Harris, Carlson & Poata-Smith 2013, p. 5).

As earlier noted, my connections with the Aboriginal girls in this study were different to those I formed with Māori students in Aotearoa New Zealand. We as Aboriginal people share the ‘continuing effects of colonization with colonised people’s worldwide’ (Gilbert 1995, p. 147), and on a deep level that connects us with indigenous peoples who have been impacted by colonisation, including Māori. Fredericks et al. (2012) argue that today, Māori and Indigenous Australian women need to respond, change and adapt to the places in which they live. They speak of their experiences of others trying to dictate what constitutes their ‘authentic’ Indigenous womanhood, as Māori and Indigenous Australian women, stating:

they ignore the contemporary reality that who we are now as women is shaped by the colonial, political and socio-historical contexts of us and our peoples. Restricted understandings of Indigenous women do not assist us or our nations, and do not embrace the fluidity needed for the situations we find ourselves in today (p. 2).

They remind Indigenous women such as myself that it is the lives we live, within our communities as Indigenous women, which strengthen our ability to take action (Fredericks et al. 2012, p. 4). This action, and involvement in community, includes

contributing to my Indigenous community via Indigenous education, as a teacher, and through research, as an Indigenous researcher.

The small parts of my journey I have shared in this chapter toward positioning myself are shared with a disclaimer that I am an Indigenous woman on a continual journey of growth. As noted, knowing myself is core to my pedagogy and necessitates constant reflection on my own inner life and worldview, which sparks growth and constant change. Earlier I shared my experience as a pale-skinned Aboriginal woman. Without question, my Aboriginality will continue to be questioned due to my appearance, an experience shared by several of the Aboriginal young women in this study. This chapter, in addition to locating me as researcher, opens windows to broader questions toward locating contemporary Aboriginal identities. As Nakata (2013) states:

The question that many Indigenous Australians ask in private is: How can others... make judgement of an individual's claim to an Indigenous identity in the light of diverse Aboriginal historical experiences, the inter-generational mixing of heritages, and the contemporary social and geographical mobility of younger generations? Who is in a position to judge the historical journeys of all those of indigenous descent?... Indigenous ways of 'knowing each other' through older lines of knowledge and connectedness no longer work as well as they once did for many of us. Unless an individual possesses an acceptable historical narrative and/or works hard at building and maintaining an acceptable community profile, they stand to be assessed as inauthentic, accused of concocting a fraudulent act, and on both these counts, risk being rejected by the community (p. 128).

My earlier observations as a teacher mentoring Indigenous girls in a boarding school led me to search for research on Aboriginal girls' boarding schools. The lack of literature specifically focused on female Indigenous boarding experiences led me to conduct this research, with the focus centred on amplifying the voices of students, vital given the:

general lack of a 'critical mass' of Indigenous students in any given mainstream program leads to institutional silence regarding Indigenous students' perceptions. Rarely, if ever, is their combined voice concerning their experience, expectations, difficulties and suggestions for change sought (Balatti et al. 2004, p. 26).

The relatively small number of Indigenous voices in this study does not take away from the important messages that each of the 35 young women shared generously in this research. Before the research itself is discussed in later chapters, Chapter 2 outlines a brief history of boarding schools in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand,

36 •

separating some of the historical threads that run deep within the patterns being woven by Indigenous students in boarding schools today.

CHAPTER 2

Boarding schools in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

For Aboriginal people, the present is the past and also, the future. History, therefore, is not seen as something that has passed, but instead, is seen as something that continues today. Aboriginal people do not live within particular points in time but travel along a cyclical continuum (Gallois 2007). Dreaming is the English word ‘given to the intimately connected but distinct strands of Aboriginal belief...not to historical past but a fusion of identity and spiritual connection with the timeless present’ (Australian Broadcasting Association, 2014). Dreaming:

represents a pattern of connectivity, joining lines of sites, lines of songs, and lines of familial relationship, along lines of country – it serves to link country to all other aspects of life. The Dreaming forms a channel through which all cultural associations pass through the generations...Dreaming is not something that happened a long time in the past (Bishop, Vicary, Mitchell & Pearson 2012, p. 30).

Dreaming has been described as ‘human action in co-creation with the great Creators and the ancestral beings, which continue in the present, the continuing birth, life, death, rebirth, renewal that is human activity across millennia’ (Atkinson 2000, p. 32), a cyclical process that has no end and no beginning. These understandings are centred in this chapter, and foreground this discussion of the history of boarding schools for Aboriginal and Māori peoples, histories which impact Indigenous boarders today. The

understanding that Aboriginal people are connected to the past and future as deeply as they are to the present requires history to be viewed through a lens of relatedness:

the past...becomes/is viewed as the present and the two together are considered as 'being the time'... there is no demarcation between past and present... there is little implicit acknowledgement of different linear times as they might exist on a continuum (Janca & Bullen 2003, p. 2).

The histories of education for Māori and Aboriginal peoples are intertwined through relationships, as well as being physically connected (by our shared Pacific Ocean). Boarding schools in both nations were historically used as tools of colonisation toward assimilating Indigenous peoples in both Australia and New Zealand. The resulting histories presented in this chapter are mostly derived from non-Indigenous sources, but through relatedness, the historical events recounted in this chapter are understood as impacting Aboriginal and Māori people in the past/present. Histories, as Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains, include the weaving of 'Western knowledge systems and... spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape, and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen' (p. 74) which do not always organically meet. My work as an Indigenous scholar requires cutting, trimming and sewing these pieces together, with relatedness the sinew I use, explicitly, to connect the pieces of this thesis. Sometimes, this requires me to draw out the sinew and explain it to the reader so that no meaning is lost, even if it appears repetitive. In preparation for this chapter, I draw on the metaphor of a cloak. In the Māori context, a cloak is known as a korowai. For Aboriginal people, cloaks are known as possum-skin cloaks. The creation of a cloak in both contexts is seen as a community event:

It is not simply the action of making...it is relational, a journey of people coming together, sharing knowledge, healing and growing in pride and identity and culture. As well as a teaching a skill...stories are told and connection to community made...identity: who they are, where they come from and a shared appreciation of how all is connected' (Bamblett 2014, p. 134).

The reason I use the metaphor of the korowai, is because each:

has an individual whakapapa and are unique because they are individually conceptualised and therefore carry their own story. The DNA image...is a metaphoric symbol of our human whakapapa...a double stranded structure that is twisted into a helix. Similarly, the whiri whenu resembles a helix shape. They are physical manifestations of esoteric knowledge from our ancient past brought to life (Taituha 2014, p. 44).

The prepared harakeke fibre threads, whenu, are twisted and kept until weaving, in the shape of a helix, the whiri whenu. The cloaks woven of the whenu are considered to hold spiritually the stories of ancestors and the past, they are in fact, a physical embodiment of indigenous worldviews. Cloaks are history embodied, ‘events that occurred before you were born...the fabric of your life...the experiences of your tīpuna weigh heavily on the present’ (Ka’ai-Mahuta 2010, p. 53). In this way, events are woven into the cloak, representing the past within the present, combining:

genealogies, history, traditional knowledge, carving, preparing flax, in fact nature itself... something that teaches you how to respect the whole of nature, because Māori things involve the whole of nature... This is how we get to know things. They’re handed down from generation to generation and it becomes part of you (Mikaere 2011, p. 303).

For both Māori and Aboriginal people, cloaks serve purposes for physical protection and warmth, while also maintaining spiritual, emotional, and historical connections. In this way, the indigenous world can be said to be:

a woven culture... it is important to acknowledge a spiritual connection... The weaver adheres to specific and coherent practices based on tikanga Māori (custom, method)... The concept of whāriki embraces the kaupapa (the reason for weaving a particular whāriki). Whāriki is complex. It tells a story and, as such, breathes the character and the philosophy of the weaver. Māori say that weaving changes the mauri (life force) of the harakeke by interacting with the life force of the weaver from being a child of Tāne (god of the forest) to becoming a taonga (Timu-Parata 2010, p. 50).

As with cloak making, relatedness forms a sinew or binding material underpinning the separate pieces of this thesis. To illustrate the deep connections of the future and the past, the physical and the spiritual, I have used Māori language throughout this thesis so far, in its unique way of demonstrating the relatedness of an indigenous worldview. We can recognise relatedness in language, where words have multiple meanings, binding those meanings together intimately: ‘in the Māori language *whenua* is the word for both land and afterbirth and *wā* is the word for time and/or space’ (Middleton & Mackinley 2009, p. 3). In this way, a woman gives birth to land, the land also being seen as a placenta or afterbirth. Time, is also space, and space, time – hence, the Māori word for time and space is the same (Tuhivai Smith 2012, p. 52). This is important to yarn about before discussing historical events, because these connections, rather than

being on a timeline, are best represented as spirals, or koru, reflecting the interconnectedness and relatedness of te ao Māori and the Aboriginal worldview. Again, history is seen as similar to the weaving of a korowai woven from mother Earth or 'Papa-tū-ā-nuku...whenua (land) and wairua...connection between land, the maker of the object and the living people...the journey of the making is as important as the completed garment' (Taituha 2014, p. 34-37).

The process of creating a cloak, and the finished cloak itself, are physical representations of the circular way Aboriginal and Māori people experience life. As with Dreaming, Māori understand the past co-existing with the present and the future:

The Eurocentric view of English speakers is that time is linear, whereas Māori view it as cyclic. The Māori word for the 'past' or 'before' is mua, but it is also the word for 'front'. The Māori word for 'future' or 'time to come' is muri, which is also the word for 'behind'. Therefore, time 'past' is the time that came 'before', and 'future' time is the time that came 'after'. According to a Māori world-view, the past lies before us (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010, p. 52).

Again, the relatedness that underpins the Māori worldview is seen through te reo Māori, and again I draw out the sinew here to explicitly emphasise the connection of the past with the present, and the subsequent way in which we must understand Indigenous conceptions of history:

because of the way in which Māori view time... Māori believe that the past will often provide insight into the present situation...the injustices of the past continue to affect the situation of Māori today (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010, p. 252).

When applied to history, relatedness allows a new understanding of the past; in contrast to Western temporal concepts: linear time, distinction, categorization and definition. 'Academic historical knowledge privileges the existence of a single and verifiable truth, a separation of events and perceptions of them, linear time and sequence, narrativization, development, cause and effect, and the primacy of stable, written texts' (Whimp 2008, p. 403). Because of the interconnectedness of Indigenous scholarship, which by nature is always multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary, many scholars struggle to place indigenous scholarship within their frames of academic reference. 'There's resistance from academia and from the [social science] profession to saying, 'No, *you* should be fitting around what *we* have'. There's that kind of tension' (Middleton & Mackinley 2009, p. 13), 'we're Māori first and [social science

subject] applies to Māori, it fits around it...the gown and korowai...you can wear them both (Middleton & Mackinley 2009, p. 19). This is not a history thesis, nor an education thesis. It is an Aboriginal thesis. This chapter in particular, discusses the history of schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, and as such I urge the reader to remember that for indigenous boarders, 'every 'now' is the consequence of many 'thens'... What goes on now is interpreted from previous knowledge...The present we live in is built from past events' (Tonkin 1995, p. 9), the past is 'that which lies before... 'nga ra o mua', the days in front' (Binney 2001, p. 4) and future, all parts of the same whole (Royal 1992, p. 26). The histories discussed in this chapter are therefore both 'located in the distant past and eternally contemporary... continually being re-expressed and re-interpreted' (Metge 1998, p. 8-9). As Ballard (2014) explains, indigenous peoples across Oceania live their histories in the present, and express these through performance, stories, and spoken word, requiring outsiders to adjust temporal conceptions to acknowledge this in their work with indigenous peoples and knowledges.

It is important to note the histories in Chapter 2 are recounted mostly from non-Indigenous sources such as written histories, with:

most of it is based on records written and kept by papalagi [Westerners]... So we can say that that history is a papalagi history of themselves and their activities in our region; it is an embodiment of their memories/perceptions/and interpretations... when we teach that history in our schools we are transmitting their memories to our children, and consequently reordering our children's memories... It is possible to erase, replace, or reorder people's memories. Colonialism is a process of erasing and replacing and reordering the memories of the colonised to suit the colonisers... trapped in a reality dictated by others (Wendt 1987, p. 86-87).

Colonialism is woven deeply within the core of the history of boarding schools and schooling for Indigenous girls in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. These histories have been written and photographed mostly by non-Indigenous people:

Pākehā written histories have dominated...It is important that Māori interpretations of history be preserved and that Māori truth is told. This will ensure that the history of Aotearoa/New Zealand is not 'whitewashed'. In listening to the voices of the colonized, rather than the observations and reports of those who were the colonizers, a gap in perceptions soon becomes apparent... It is only relatively recently that Western-trained historians have come to realize that they have been perpetuating colonialist attitudes in their so-called objective histories (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010, p. 236).

In recent times, histories of residential schooling for indigenous peoples worldwide are being re-interpreted and re-examined. Lee (2009) states that such histories must be re-viewed, especially through pūrākau (stories): ‘pūrākau can continue to be constructed in various forms, contexts and media to better understand the experiences of our lives as Māori’ (p. 1-2). By re-examining the past, new stories, including visual stories through photographs, can be created, providing indigenous peoples with sovereignty over their histories as well as present readings of their pasts. One example of this is the work of Strathman (2015), who analysed a group of photographs taken by indigenous boarding students of both Rainy Mountain and Phoenix Indian School in the early 1900s.

Strathman (2015) applies the concept of visual sovereignty to Native boarding school student photographs, providing a counter-reading of colonial imagery found in historical visual archives globally concerning Indigenous boarding and mission school students. Based on images taken by Native boarders Parker McKenzie and Nettie Odlety, Strathman (2015) re-views these historical images and determines that Native boarding students in these schools maintained:

their own tribal identity—even if the tribes did not traditionally coexist in a peaceful manner. This tribal integration in the Indian boarding schools led to a type of intertribal identity that fostered a sense of community among all students regardless of tribal origins. The manner in which these Pan-Indian students presented themselves was not Western, nor was it traditionally tribal’ (p. 130).

Before drawing the thread of visual sovereignty out even further for the reader, I make note here of the notion of pan-indigenous identity, especially considering Aboriginal and Māori boarding populations today which are comprised of students from multiple indigenous nations, iwi and hapu. This is a concept the reader might keep in mind as we view the work of students at Colleges A, B and C. Visual sovereignty is closely related to student voice and agency, which are also identified by Strathman (2015) in her re-view of a collection of historical boarding school images, taken by indigenous students states that:

Agency has largely been absent in the visual history of the boarding school experience. By visually recording their own experiences, these marginalized students subverted the otherwise oppressive institution and claimed parts of it for themselves. In doing so, they created a counter-archive that documented their visual sovereignty (p. 744). These students are acutely aware of the contemporary identities that they are projecting. They represent a vibrant and

contemporary Native culture, dynamically reconfiguring their Native identities and embracing modernity and mainstream culture on their own terms (p. 737).

Strathman's (2015) conclusion that Native boarding school students used photography to capture and speak about their experiences, relationships and indigenous identities is powerfully linked to the photographs created by the 35 indigenous students created in this study. The images discussed by Strathman (2015) taken in the early 1900s show similarities to the themes I identified across the collection of images produced by students at Colleges A, B and C in my own research, as illustrated by the following photographs.

Image Omitted: *'Nettie Odlety and Francis Ross, 1915.*
Photograph by Parker McKenzie (Strathman 2015, p. 234)

Strathman (2015) explains:

With a smile, they welcome the photographer whose agenda is simply to show his affection by taking a snapshot... warmth and intimacy... simply not found in earlier photographs of boarding school students... By enacting visual sovereignty these photographs reframe the Indian boarding school experience, placing the focus on individual experiences and personal relationships rather than sanctioned activities (Strathman 2015, p. 735).

Student photographs capturing their own experiences in photographic form can be re-read through visual sovereignty, and in this process, the past is able to be understood in new ways, connected with the present and through a lens that places power with the indigenous subject. As Tuscarora scholar Rickard states, all

‘photographs made by indigenous makers are the documentation of our sovereignty...the images are all connected, circling in ever-sprawling spirals the terms of our experiences as human beings... hooking memories through time’ (Smith et al. 1995, p. 54), an ‘important aspect of indigenous visual heritage, the connections that create a dynamic, tangible link between the past, present, and future’ (Strathman 2015, p. 743).

Strathman (2015) determines that in the student photographs she re-viewed, female indigenous boarders ‘have taken the camera into their own hands... The photographs seem to back up the idea that the dorm rooms were not only a place for sleeping, but a space where friendships were formed’ (p. 741). One student photographer shows ‘her friends in a moment of camaraderie with their arms looped around each other’s shoulders as they enthusiastically grin...[a] representation of the interpersonal relationships forged between her classmates and tribal members’ (p. 743).

Image Omitted: ‘*Deoma Doyebi (Kiowa) and Ethel Roberts (Wichita), ca. 1916. Photograph by Nettie Odlety (Strathman 2015, p. 741)*

Image Omitted: *'Nettie Odlety, Inside the Girls' Dormitory—Phoenix Indian Boarding School, c. 1915. Parker McKenzie Collection (Strathman 2015, p. 740)*

Strathman's (2015) work and the student images themselves add weight to the concept that boarding school, for Indigenous students, is experienced as 'a complex network of bonds and divisions that simultaneously bound and segmented' (Tsianina Lomawaima 1994, p. 97). Visual student voices in historical images show themes of friendship, the blending of indigenous community boundaries through living together, the closeness and support of other indigenous women within boarding school dorms, and the bonds shared by students living away from their families and communities. As Royal states, 'the spider's web is useful in approximating the experience of isolating just one story from the fabric of a number of stories' (1998, p. 103). Chapter 2 is a thread in the web of boarding school histories. The reader might consider Chapter 2, based on historical sources produced mostly by non-Indigenous researchers, as one thread in a cloak that is worn today by Aboriginal and Māori people. History, as demonstrated by Strathman (2015), can be re-examined by Indigenous people in the present, including through photography and other art forms. I share one more example of Aboriginal people re-presenting and re-viewing their histories of residential schooling.

The Blacktown Native Institution [BNI] Project is a collective of Aboriginal artists who re-examine the histories and stories of the Native Institution in Parramatta, discussed later in this chapter. The BNI project developed into a website, which

continues to share these stories and encourages re-examination of the history of this Institution. The site states:

The Blacktown Native Institution is the earliest remaining example of an institution built specifically to house and indoctrinate Aboriginal people with European customs, and is representative of the origins of institutionalisation of Aboriginal people in Australia. The Institution played a key role in the history of colonial assimilation policies and race relations in Australia. The site is also important to the Sydney Maori community as an early tangible link with colonial history of trans-Tasman cultural relations and with the history of children removed by missionaries. The institutionalisation of Aboriginal children at the site can also be seen as the genesis of government ideology that would later evolve into forced Aboriginal child removal and what has now become known as the 'Stolen Generation'...For Aboriginal people in particular, the Blacktown Native Institution holds great cultural, spiritual and heritage significance as place that symbolises dispossession, loss and forced child removal (BNI Project, 2015).

Several descendants of the children who were kept at the Institute have participated in the BNI project, including Aboriginal woman Leanne Tobin, who created the visual performance work titled 'Start Here Now.'

Image Omitted: 'Start Here Now (BNI Project 2015)

Tobin (2015) describes the meaning of her work:

The ground spiral starts at the centre and radiates outwards. It refers to the advent of the institutionalisation and the wide-spread ongoing 'ripple' effect on our people, as they are forced to assimilate into the new world imposed on them. As a healing, the spiral also alludes back to the weaving technique of the collecting baskets woven by the Traditional women...down through many generations. The use of wood-chips on top of the ground gives evidence to what happened here: the mass destruction and clearing of the bushland to make way for farming. Green gum leaves are traditionally used for healing and cleansing in smoking ceremonies and dance. The leaves here,

are laid down on top of the woodchips by community members... unity and healing while also acknowledging and cleansing the pain of the past (BMI Project, 2015).

Speaking of the performance, on the ground where the Native Institution once stood in Parramatta, Tobin (2015) states:

It was a powerful visit. All of us felt moved as we walked upon the very earth that my ancestors had walked. The sadness of the site was potent with a willy wagtail heralding our arrival and the discovery of a dying peewee heightened the overall neglect and bereavement I felt here (BMI Project, 2015).

This artwork is particularly meaningful because Tobin's own ancestors were taken to the Native Institution. She describes her connection to this, the beginnings of residential education and mission schools in Australia for Aboriginal people:

The first 'stolen generation', the Native Institution was set up with the aim of 'taming of the blacks'...The Institute and the Black's Town is part of my family's story on my mother's side. A dark secret for a long time, the truth finally emerged for my family in 1984 upon researching my mother's family tree. My great-great-great grandmother Maria Lock was the first enrolment at the Institute, when it was originally established in Parramatta on the 18th January 1815...She was around 8 years of age at the time and was taken away to be 'civilised' (BMI Project, 2015).

The BMI Project is a powerful example of how artwork, including digital recordings and photographs of artworks, installations and performances, are shared online, allowing re-examination of history through stories, such as those of the Native Institution. Keenan (2005) reminds us that 'history at once provides both narratives of the past, and frameworks within which to interpret those narratives. This is because the past substantially converges with the present' (p. 55). I will now re-view the histories of boarding schools in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, toward allowing the reader an understanding of some of the threads that are woven through the current experiences of boarders shared in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

In researching the history of boarding schools in Australia, I reviewed the literature for research that highlighted Indigenous student experiences. There was little research available on Australian boarding schools, scant literature on Indigenous boarding experiences, a very small body of literature on Indigenous women's boarding experiences, and no work centred on Indigenous boarding experiences from the student perspective. Lockard (cited in Kriedel 2010) explains that the:

history of formal education for the indigenous peoples of the Pacific – Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Hawai'i – parallels the history of education of the American Indian. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Native Schools act of 1887 made English part of all government schools. In Hawai'i, Hawaiian language was banned in public and private schools between 1886 and 1986... indigenous learners are often faced with cultural replication models of schooling that lead to a false assumption that they must act White in order to achieve academic success (p. 467-468).

When I came across this quote, I had been looking only at Aboriginal girls' experiences in Australian boarding schools. Māori boarding experiences piqued my interest in the earliest stages of this research, as my partner is Māori, and attended a Māori boarding school. I knew, through our discussions, that Aotearoa New Zealand boarding schools shared similarities to Australian boarding schools and, that Aotearoa New Zealand has a model of Indigenous boarding which Australia does not. In relation to Indigenous education, Maughan (2012) found that:

high participation, retention and academic achievements of Indigenous students had embedded cultural identity throughout the school and the curriculum. Often this was as a whole-school philosophy that embraced Indigenous values and ways of working' (p. iv).

Importantly, Maughan (2012) also notes educational policy in Australia is 'premised on the assumption that educational achievement is through mainstream education systems and instruction in the English language. This assumption is at odds with international evidence' (p. 19).

Currently, Aboriginal students in Australia are only able to access schooling in the English language. Māori education, however, provides students schooling in their own language, te reo Māori. Schooling that does not encourage and empower Aboriginal identity is seen by Sarra (2010) as encouraging Indigenous disadvantage. He states that Indigenous disadvantage will end only when Australian education respects Indigenous cultural identity, and when Indigenous students are themselves appreciated. As with Australia, boarding schools in Aotearoa New Zealand initially:

played a significant part in the enforcement of assimilation policies... laws that separated Indigenous children from their parents, and then institutionalised them in residential schools and settlements and forced them to learn English language and culture. Although Māori children were not separated from their parents, schools were still used as the 'chosen vehicle' for assimilating the next generation of Māori. From 1871, instruction in Aotearoa New Zealand schools was only allowed in English, and children sometimes faced corporal punishment if they spoke Māori language within the school grounds (Maughan 2012, p. 4).

While experiences of colonisation connect Aboriginal people with Māori, the development of Māori education in Aotearoa New Zealand was different to the development of Indigenous education in Australia. Eurocentric views commanded education in Aotearoa New Zealand during colonisation by the British. After the Treaty of Waitangi established Aotearoa New Zealand as a British Crown colony in 1840, the aim of assimilating Māori into settler society saw boarding schools established in Aotearoa New Zealand with a focus on training students in domestic, agriculture and trade skills (Nathan 1973). Such schools rested on the assumption that European knowledge was superior to Indigenous knowledge, and boarding schools were ‘seen as a way of consolidating Christianity, a means of fostering Western standards and maintaining racial harmony, and finally as instruments of assimilation’ (Nathan 1973, p. 49). Morris Matthews and Jenkins (1999) argue that central to the development of colonised identity for Māori was the government-controlled school system for indigenous New Zealanders, established under the Native Schools Act 1867:

From the outset the goal of the state was clear. Schooling was to be used as a mechanism for bringing about the assimilation of Māori. Education policies for Māori were to reflect settler views about what non-European populations should be taught in order to better bring them into line with accepted European norms (Morris Matthews & Jenkins 1999, p. 340).

Central to the goal of assimilation was the Native School Policy, which emphasised the ‘Europeanising’ of Māori (Jenkins & Morris Matthews 1998, p. 85). Several Māori girls’ boarding schools were established in the 1800s by Christian denominations, operating under the expectation that Māori girls would return home, educated and assimilated (Smith 2009; Nathan 1973). Engela, Phillips and DellaCava (2012) note:

an 1847 Educational Ordinance encouraged the establishment of English-speaking industrial boarding schools and the removal of Māori children... The only way a Māori child could be further educated was in a Māori denominational boarding school, which provided two years of education... However, the Māori denominational boarding schools were designed to create a two-class system in which those Natives [sic] with the most potential for acculturation were further socialized and then returned home to “uplift” the more “savage” elements in their communities... emphasis was given to the training and socializing of the girls, since they were seen to hold the key to acculturation of the next generation (p. 283-284).

St Joseph’s Māori Girls’ College, a mission college boarding school which opened in 1867, forms the third case study in this research, as College C. Māori colleges were described in the 1954 edition of *Te Ao Hou The New World* as

increasing Māori educational attainment, encouraging Christianity, and producing Māori leaders, as:

places where teachers and pupils join in serving God... The arts of European civilisation were first spread among the Māori people through the Mission school... Traditionally, the products of the Māori mission colleges have been leaders in their communities (National Library of Aotearoa New Zealand 2014).

Leadership and cultural identity have been part of education at St Joseph's Māori Girls' College for many decades. By 1964, all boarders at St Joseph's were attending te reo Māori classes. *Te Ao Hou* notes that students graduating from St Joseph's Māori Girls' College in 1964 were gaining office jobs or going on to study nursing, dental nursing or teaching, highlighting past pupil Georgina Kingi as being in her second year of teaching at Auckland University. Miss Kingi would go on to be principal of St Joseph's Māori Girls' College, which is College C in this study, described further in Chapter 6. The image below is one I photographed, a reproduction of an image I found in the archives at College C showing Miss Kingi in her korowai on her induction day.



Georgina Kingi's induction at St Joseph's Māori Girls' College (reproduced with permission)

As with Indigenous Australian boarding experiences, Māori experiences of boarding schools are under-researched, one of the main studies that exists being conducted was a decade after mission schools became controlled by the Aotearoa New Zealand Government. Codd and Stewart (1975) conducted a study with the 1972 third-form female boarding students of Napier Girls High School, with a sample including 163 Pākehā and 42 Māori girls. At the time, the school had two boarding hostels for Pākehā girls, and a separate independent boarding facility a short distance from the school for Māori called Hukarere. Codd and Stewart administered standardised tests (ability, attainment and personality tests) in the first week of 1970. In 1973, students completed questionnaires assessing their attitudes, interests and family backgrounds.

Codd and Stewart (1975) found that Māori girls were more emotionally stable than Pākehā girls, however teachers were more likely to rate Pākehā girls as more honest, careful of property, motivated and respectful of authority than Māori students. Of importance to this thesis are Codd and Stewart's findings regarding the impact of boarding schools on Māori students in relation to their connection with community, personal development, identity and problems faced by Māori girls struggling with 'the dual demands of establishing personal identity in a Pākehā institution and satisfying the expectations of their parents to attain extrinsic scholastic goals' (Codd & Stewart 1975, p. 199).

The authors note that for 'Māori adolescents there is an irreparable severing of ties with the rural community and a resultant sense of estrangement' (Codd & Stewart 1975, p. 195) when attending boarding schools, and that:

for the Māori girl, boarding school provides opportunities for the social learning and scholastic success demanded by Pākehā society, but she is often aware of the cost in terms of her sense of community belonging (Codd & Stewart, 1975, p. 196).

Within the study, one in three Māori girls stated that, upon return, they felt strange in their local community, or felt they had very little to do with it, while only one in 10 Pākehā girls responded in this way. The authors concluded that the:

Māori girl, who is far more likely to come from these lower class ranks than is her Pākehā counterpart, bears a compounding of educational adversity with added problems of language competence and acculturation stress (Codd & Stewart 1975, p. 198).

Jenkins and Morris Matthews (1998) describe Aotearoa New Zealand boarding schools of the past as suited to the 'purpose of colonisation... in selecting

only the potential young leaders for training at the Māori boarding schools, the fabric of the life in the kainga [community] was weakened' (p. 89), with boarding schools generally selecting the brightest Māori to 'be educated along the lines of an English middle-class Victorian girls school. They were to dress, behave and speak as befitted a Victorian middle-class woman' (Morris Matthews & Jenkins 1999, p. 342).

While it is outside the scope of this thesis to detail Māori education in full, its development over the last century, including the inclusion of Māori culture in state schools, Māori preschools (Kōhanga Reo) and other schools (Kura Kaupapa Māori) has led to te reo Māori being taught in many Aotearoa New Zealand schools, both independent and government-controlled. Māori boarding schools today are leaders in Māori cultural education and are attended by successive generations of Māori leaders, both male and female.

While Māori boarding schools may originally have been established with aims of assimilation, they have developed into culturally inclusive schools that focus on the teaching of te reo Māori, Māoritanga and tikanga Māori. Today, several original Māori boarding schools continue to thrive, including St Joseph's Māori Girls' College. The Aotearoa New Zealand Government has 'recognised the role schools played in the implementation of their assimilation policies. They also recognise the significant role schools have to play in re-dressing the disadvantage created as a legacy of these policies' (Maughan 2012, p. 4), with subsequent school reform based on the Treaty of Waitangi.

Indigenous education in Aotearoa New Zealand today operates in accordance with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, applied through the Aotearoa New Zealand National Education Guidelines. The Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement signed between the British Crown and Māori people, which encompasses principles on which representatives from each country made a political agreement, in order to form an Aotearoa New Zealand Government (Aotearoa New Zealand Government 2010). The National Education Guidelines are based on the concept that Māori have the right to education that is inclusive of their cultures, identities and language. As such, Aotearoa New Zealand schools are explicitly required to plan for the success and achievement of Māori, undertake self-review processes, and report back to the community on these processes and outcomes, recognising 'the culturally distinct role Māori play in Aotearoa New Zealand as an indigenous people, and the capacity,

aspirations and initiative of Māori to be self-determining' (Goren 2009, p. v). Australian Indigenous education has not benefited from a treaty, and has developed in a different way to Māori education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

As with Aotearoa New Zealand, European education and Christianity were two of the earliest tools deployed by the British toward colonising Aboriginal people in Australia. Māori were actually visiting Australia during this time, searching for European knowledges. A Māori rangatira, Te Pahi, sent his son, Maa-tara, from the Bay of Islands to Australia so he could gain knowledge from the Europeans and take it home for Māori to learn from. During his visit, Te Pahi met a local missionary, Samuel Marsden. Te Pahi's relative, Ruatara, took his own voyage to England in 1809. By chance, he also met Samuel Marsden who was travelling home to Australia on the same ship. Forming a friendship of sorts, upon arrival in Australia, Ruatara lived with Marsden at Parramatta for 18 months. Before his return to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1812, Ruatara asked Marsden to send a teacher to Aotearoa New Zealand. This was in the hope of providing Māori youth the education to read and write in te reo Māori.

In October 1815, the Anglican chaplains of Sydney decided an establishment was required for the civilisation and improvement of the increasing numbers of Māori in Australia. Governor Lachlan Macquarie and William Shelley had previously opened the Native Institution, discussed at the start of this chapter. The aims of the Institution are clear, based on the announcement of the establishment of Native Institution on 10 December, 1814 in the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, under Government and General Orders (National Library of Australia, 2016):

His Excellency the Governor having long viewed...the very wretched State of the Aborigines of this Country; and having resolved in his Mind the most probable and promising means of ameliorating their condition, has now taken the Resolution to...improve the Energies of this innocent, destitute and unoffending Race. With this Anxiety to make one Experiment... to ascertain how far the Condition of the Natives may be improved by the Application of such Means as are within his Power... to effect the Civilization of the Aborigines of New South Wales, and to render their Habits more domesticated and industrious... a reasonable Hope of producing such an Improvement in their condition...has determined to institute a school for the Education of the Native Children of both sexes...there shall be a School for the Aborigines of New South Wales, established in the Town of Parramatta...the Institution shall be placed under the immediate management and care of Mr William Shelly as Superintendant and Principal Instructor... the Main Object of the Institution shall be Civilization of the Aborigines of

both Sexes... Children of both sexes shall be instructed in common, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic...Girls Shall also be taught Needle-work...the Manager or Superintendant shall have the immediate Care of the Children...the Committee shall meet Quarterly at the Town of Parramatta...examining the Pupils as to their Progress in Civilization, Education, and Morals; and how far the necessary Attention has been paid to their Diet, Health, and Cleanliness...the proposed Institution shall be opened...on Wednesday the 18th Day of January...no Child, after having been admitted into the Institution, shall be permitted to leave it, or be taken away by any Person whatever (whether Parents or other Relatives) until such Time as the Boys shall have attained the Age of Sixteen Years, and the Girls Fourteen Years.

As such, in the years that followed, Aboriginal children separated from their families and living at the Native Institution, were taught skills to become labourers and servants for colonists, given basic lessons in English, agriculture and craft and converted to Christianity (Brook & Kohen 1991; Fletcher 1989). As planned, a similar institution was built for the growing number of Māori, a seminary named Rangitōa, also built in Parramatta.

The Seminary for Aotearoa New Zealanders in Parramatta remained separate from the Native Institution, although there was some later interaction between Māori and Aboriginal students. A relative of Hongi lived with George Clarke, who was in charge of the Native Institution when it was moved in 1822 to Black Town, thirteen miles from Parramatta (Jones & Jenkins 2011, p. 59).

Image Omitted: *'The town of Sydney in New South Wales'* (Havell & Taylor, 1823).

The image above from the late 1810s clearly shows Māori in the foreground wearing korowai, as part of the Parramatta community. These early connections between Māori and those involved in Aboriginal education continued when William Hall took over the Native Institution in 1826. He had several Māori children living with his family. Because of a high number of Māori student deaths at the seminary, Marsden closed it in 1822. Several of these children remain buried in Parramatta today.

These two institutions mark significant points in our histories as indigenous peoples, connecting our journeys, these stories continuing in the present. As with the Aboriginal descendants of the Native Institution described at the beginning of this chapter, the grounds of the Māori Seminary, Rangihou, are today, of great significance to Māori today, especially those with whakapapa to who died while at Rangitōa:

between 190 and 194 years ago, as many as 14 high standing Maori... children...related to Hongi Hika...passed away whilst under the care of the Reverend Samuel Marsden...each attended the Seminary that was built here in 1815...This site was revealed on Saturday 30th June 2012...The burial site is without doubt a significant site for Māori in Australia due to the high concentration of spiritual activity (wairua) directly linking this site to their homeland. The site was also privy to major historical interactions between Aboriginal, Maori and British settlers prior to the British colonization of New Zealand. It continues to hold significant relevance to the ongoing relationships between Aboriginal, Māori and the community. The Rangihou site is also significant as a community where Māori lived outside of New Zealand among Aboriginals and the British Settlers of the time...Visitors wishing to view the site are discouraged from doing so until the appropriate cultural rituals and ceremonies have been completed that the site be secured physically as well as spiritually. Ancestral spirits (Maori dead) still converge, guard and protect this sacred site and do not welcome any person/s that disturb, destroy or disrespect the sacredness contained therein...For 190 years these children have been buried in an unmarked and unknown burial site close to the Rangihou Seminary. It is now that they have choosen [sic] to make their presence known (Rangihou, 2012).

The histories of the Native Institution and of Rangihou, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand's first educational institutions for Indigenous students, remain connected to the present for the descendants of those children who were taken there, including Jennifer Holt-Alexander who was pictured below in the *Parramatta Sun* article 'Maori spirits standing guard over Parramatta grave sites' (Lawrence, 2012):

Image Omitted (*Lawrence 2012*)

Wearing her korowai, Holt-Alexander stands proudly, demonstrating how these histories are threaded deeply through the cloak of indigenous boarding and residential schooling for Māori and Aboriginal peoples. These early institutions also mark the start of education being employed as a weapon of assimilation in Australia, albeit through experimentation.

Although the Native Institution was a dormitory and school, the earliest beginnings of Australian boarding schools in particular, are attributed to Thomas Hobbes Scott, the first Archdeacon of Australia (Jupp 2001). In 1826, Scott submitted plans for boarding schools to be developed in Australia. William Grant Broughton, Scott's successor, reached Sydney in September 1829. Scott handed over his authority on 16 September, and it was decided the 'church would have a paternal concern for convicts, Aboriginals [sic] and settlers in the new areas, and a special responsibility for the organization and control of education' (Cable 1966). Broughton agreed that NSW needed schools similar to those he attended in Britain (The King's School 2015), primarily to provide education for the children of colonists. His *Plan for the establishment and regulation of The King's School in New South Wales* was given to Governor Ralph Darling in 1830, with approval given for development of two boarding schools. One established in Sydney was short-lived. The other, The King's School at Parramatta, continues today (The King's School 2015) as Australia's first and oldest boarding school.

This school is connected with the histories and stories outlined of Rangihou, and the Native Institute, all located in Parramatta. One example, similar to the reclaiming of histories by the Blacktown Native Institute Project, was the Rua Rau Festival held at the Old Kings School, Parramatta on 24 October, 2014. As with the Blacktown Native Institution Project, Māori and Aboriginal people re-claimed their histories and celebrated the Rua Rau Festival, through dance and performance, to raise awareness 'about the longstanding relationship between Maori and Australia...for over 200 years' (Watson, 2012).

Image Omitted: *Aboriginal and Māori dancers at the Rua Rau Festival at Old King's College*
(Watson 2012)

Both the Rua Rau Festival (rua rau meaning '200' in te reo Māori) and the Blacktown Native Institution Project can be seen as acts of sovereignty, both by the local Aboriginal people, and by Māori, reclaiming their histories in Australia. These examples demonstrate the integral links between the history of boarding schools in both contexts have to the present for the boarders I worked with, outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Image Omitted: *The King's School, 1890* (CathNews 2011)

Returning to the development of boarding schools in Australia, after the opening of The King's School, boarding schools opened in Adelaide (St Peter's

College), Tasmania (Hutchins School, and Launceston Church Grammar School) and Melbourne (Diocesan Grammar School) (White 2004). Initially there was low demand for boarding schools in Australia by European families, run by churches with limited funds (Brown 1970). At the time, a comprehensive public school system (known as the Stanley system) had recently been rolled out in Ireland in 1831, and was providing elementary education incorporating both religious and state schools under one system of non-denominational education with financial subsidy. In Australia, the secular Denominational Schools Board and Board of National Education had been appointed to manage the education system developing in Australia, however, provision of a public education system in Australia, in line with Ireland, soon became a public priority.

As the public pushed for a secular state school system, opposition to denominational schools was growing, based on reasons of unequal educational advantage, which was perceived as creating class division. As a result, secularising education acts were passed in all colonies by the early 1880s, and between 1872 and 1895 all Australian colonies abolished government funding to church schools. The withdrawal of government funds fuelled the determination of the Catholic church to continue providing faith-based education, developing the formal Catholic education in Australia that continues today (MacGinley & Kelly 1988).

In 1850, the New South Wales Select Committee decided against sending Aboriginal children to schools. In 1853, the NSW Board of National Education rejected a mixed boarding school proposal, regarding Aboriginal education as pointless (Cadzow, n.d.). Mission schools were established, continuing the aims of assimilation and conversion, and continued into the next century. In NSW from 1880 onwards, Aboriginal people were increasingly introduced to Western education through missionary schools, training institutes, and mixed and segregated public schooling (Cadzow n.d.).

As noted, experiments in Aboriginal education such as the Native Institution, built to 'educate and assimilate Aboriginal Children' (Middleton 2010, p. 180), mark the beginnings of the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their parents to be raised within European residential settings (Middleton 2010, p. 180), a period known as the Stolen Generations. Over the following decades, thousands of Australian Aboriginal children were removed from their families and forced into residential

education, mission schools and Aboriginal reserves. Buti (2002) states that much of the education practice and way of life in early residential schools and boarding institutions was aimed at inculcating European beliefs in Aboriginal children, and its remnants have lingered in Aboriginal education for many generations. This period in Aboriginal 'education' is remembered as forcing harsh, cruel restrictions and disciplinary actions in the name of Western education upon Indigenous children, breaking down traditional languages, culture, identity and knowledges. Engela, Phillips and DellaCava (2012) note that many Aboriginal children:

were forcibly removed from their families; some were sent to live in dormitories and were used as a source of cheap labour, and others were sent to residential boarding schools, also known as training institutes. European colonists in Australia also utilized boarding schools, which were operational from 1910 to 1970. The government and Christian missionaries collaborated to socialize the children to European values and work habits, in preparation for working for the colonists (p. 282).

For some Indigenous people, the painful histories that occurred for the Stolen Generations have connection with contemporary boarding schools, with residential education representing cultural dislocation and colonisation. However, not all parts of boarding schools for indigenous peoples globally, as discussed, are negative. Through visual sovereignty and re-viewing these histories, with previously overlooked aspects of the residential experience for indigenous boarders, such as friendship, increasingly being explored (Strathman 2015).

Keeping in mind the connections with the past to the present, today, it is known that an increasing number of Indigenous families are electing to send their children to non-government boarding schools in Australia (Hughes & Hughes 2009; Purdie & Buckley 2010). Many Indigenous families have no option but to send their children to board if they wish to access secondary education, which is unavailable in most parts of remote Australia. As with Māori boarding experiences described by Codd and Stewart (1975), boarding school for Aboriginal students has been linked with cultural isolation, loss of language and the breakdown of family and social structures (Smith 2009). Aboriginal students who today leave their communities for boarding school struggle with homesickness and feelings of disconnectedness from family and community, factors which cause many Aboriginal students to leave (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs 2001, p. 11).

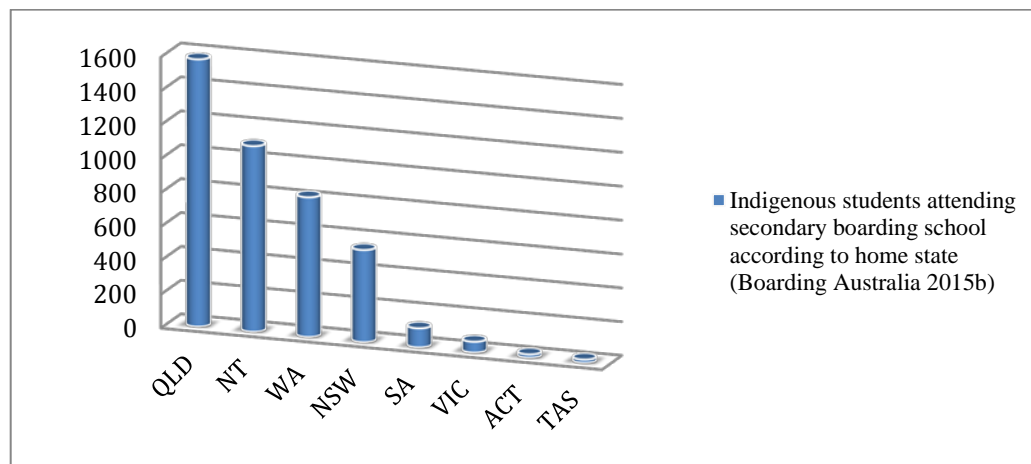
Aboriginal boarders are seen to suffer from homesickness due to ‘missing the strong social connections they enjoy within their communities... they find linguistic and cultural differences difficult to manage’ (Catholic Education Commission NSW 2008). For Aboriginal students moving from remote communities, the transition to boarding school can be especially stressful. These students are at a higher risk of experiencing anxiety and at greater risk of dropping out (Adermann & Campbell 2010). Baker and Andrews (1991) explain that boarding schools are chosen by families for a number of reasons, including rural isolation, educational opportunities, stability of educational environment, English skill development, social and cultural reasons, and social status. Each of these reasons impacts on the experience of boarding school for Indigenous students attending them today.

Some Australian boarding schools are denominational, organised around a faith-based ethos and values system, while others are independent and do not have religious affiliations. While most are private schools, there are a small number of Australian state schools with boarding facilities. Some Australian boarding schools have fully integrated boarding facilities delivered by the school, while others work in conjunction with independent boarding houses or hostels operated by a separate proprietor or board. I discussed boarding schools in Australia with several Aboriginal people I know who have family members studying at boarding school. They described boarding houses that have many international students, while others housed almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon Australian students. Urban boarding schools in Australia were described as having students from all over the world. Some boarding schools have male and female boarders, while others are single sex. Each school had different arrangements for interactions between male and female students. I argue that boarding schools are best envisaged as individual worlds within the greater universe of Australian schooling.

Papworth, Martin and Ginns (2015) state that in Australia ‘the goal of residential education programs is the development of young people and is generally a broadly-based educational program that occurs through living in a group setting at a school’ (p. 10-11). Although there are more than 170 boarding schools in Australia, little research has been conducted toward understanding the effects of boarding school on academic and non-academic outcomes for Indigenous students, according to Papworth, Martin and Ginns (2015). They argue there is a need for boarding school

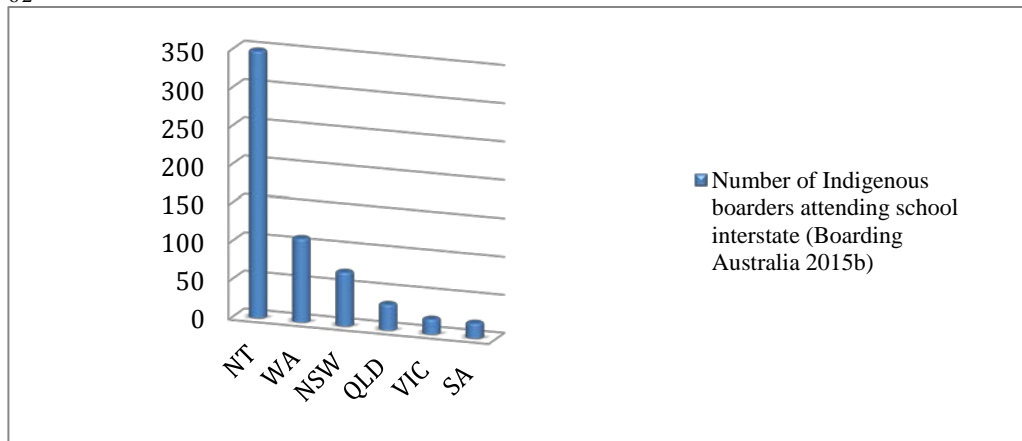
theory and research, as the small body of literature that exists focuses too narrowly on individual programs.

In 2015, a total of 200563 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in Australian schools (ABS 2016). In that year, 4249 Indigenous students were attending secondary boarding schools (Boarding Australia 2015b).



Of the 4249 Indigenous students attending boarding schools in Australia, many were attending independent schools. According to the Caroline Miller from the Independent Schools Council of Australia, 2352 Indigenous boarders were attending independent schools in 2015, with the highest numbers of Indigenous girls attending independent boarding schools in Queensland (359 girls), Northern Territory (316), Western Australia (212) and New South Wales (171) (C Miller 2016, personal communication, 13 May).

Many Indigenous boarders are boarding interstate. Of the 1097 Indigenous students from Northern Territory attending boarding school, 349 of these were attending boarding schools interstate in 2015. The highest numbers of students boarding at schools interstate were those from Northern Territory (349), Western Australia (110) and New South Wales (71 students). While Queensland had the highest number of Indigenous students attending boarding school overall (1578 students), only 34 of those students were at boarding interstate.



As numbers of Indigenous boarders have grown, state, territory and federal governments have undertaken their own reviews of Indigenous education. The Australian Minister for Indigenous Affairs formed a committee to inquire into and report on educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including boarding school outcomes. A press release by the committee asked:

What works? What's important? What can we do better? These are some of the questions being asked by the House Indigenous Affairs Committee in its inquiry into educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Committee is examining the access to, participation in and outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at different types of schools – from remote to regional, boarding, scholarship, community, independent and city schools (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs 2015).

The submissions received prior to this report provided a depth of views from community leaders, education bodies and councils, Aboriginal corporations and experts in Indigenous education. This thesis draws on several of these submissions, as they provide some of the most up-to-date information available on some aspects of the current Australian boarding school climate in which Indigenous students are educated. As Boarding Australia states:

there is a paucity of evidence regarding 'what works' and 'for whom' in boarding for Indigenous students... For this reason, the 2016 Boarding Australia conference will be held in conjunction with the Aotearoa New Zealand Boarding Schools Association and will include site visits to some innovative boarding services, including those with a focus on culturally safe boarding (Boarding Australia 2015b).

The links between Aotearoa New Zealand and Australian Indigenous boarding schools are explored further in Chapter 6.

The Wilson review (2013) regarding Indigenous education in NT received submissions that highlighted a gamut of community concerns about boarding schools for Aboriginal youth. Many submissions voiced concerns regarding children as young as 11 years old having to leave their families and communities to attend boarding schools; the subsequent loss of language and culture; the capacity of urban boarding schools to meet the educational needs of increased numbers of remote Indigenous students; objections to the forced removal of young people from community in order to access secondary education via boarding school; and the negative histories of Indigenous children attending boarding schools (Wilson 2013, p. 136). By 2015, however, the NT Government had enacted their plan to transition remote students into boarding schools even though Wilson had earlier stated that any plan to pursue this move ‘must recognise and manage the history of boarding...a history which, despite some notable successes, has not been generally effective’ and that ‘Poor retention and lack of achievement of outcomes at the secondary level are issues’ (Wilson 2013, p. 146).

The transition from primary into secondary schooling is particularly stressful for Aboriginal students, especially those forced to leave their communities to continue their education at boarding school. Walker, Robinson, Adermann and Campbell (2014) explain:

Cultural, social and language differences, being inadequately prepared, being away from familiar support and feeling shame at not having higher achievement levels may lead to behavioural and emotional problems and early school leaving (p. 338).

Wilson (2014) acknowledges that the suggestion of students being required to leave their communities at the end of primary school for urban and regional boarding schools was strongly and widely resisted in community submissions in response to his draft. There was a widely held view that middle school (years 7 to 9) should continue to be provided in remote and very remote communities due to the lack of success experienced by many Indigenous boarders in the past. The government, however:

maintains its view that the provision of a full secondary education in most remote locations is not feasible. It is, however, recognised that the significant negative feedback about the involvement of younger secondary students cannot be ignored...One difficulty in undertaking an analysis based on data that is more than anecdotal is that the DoE collects no information on outcomes of government school students leaving the system to attend boarding schools (Wilson 2014, p. 146-147).

This lack of data, identified by Wilson, was dismissed, and the boarding school option pursued. Currently Indigenous students as young as 11 are currently being transitioned into boarding schools toward finishing high school when they will be up to 18 years of age. It is known that the developmental milestones Aboriginal students reach during secondary schooling require cultural support. Aboriginal youth:

...have a distinctive sense of identity as Aboriginal people and in early adolescence this may be a source of confusion. This is not made easier by racism, discrimination and harassment often experienced by Aboriginal youth, which can further result in marginalisation and low self-esteem (Walker, Robinson, Adermann & Campbell 2014).

Moving to boarding school increases stress experienced by Aboriginal students, who are already noted as having much higher rates of mental health and social-emotional concerns than non-Indigenous students (Zubrick et al. 2005). For Aboriginal students sent away to large, non-Indigenous boarding schools in major cities, this period of change is challenging. While there is growing recognition that schools need to be ready for Indigenous children, rather than Indigenous children needing to be readied for schools (Walker, Robinson, Adermann & Campbell 2014), Australian boarding schools still struggle to implement strategies that ensure Aboriginal students feel safe, supported and valued in their Indigenous identity (Boarding Australia 2015a).

Schools in Australia have been found to make incorrect cultural assumptions about Indigenous peoples, which Aboriginal students can find upsetting and stressful (Walker, Robinson, Adermann & Campbell 2014). The associated alienation experienced by students and their families in schools is linked with lower attendance, as well as lower year 12 completion rates (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003). While Indigenous boarding students offer many strengths and add value to schools they attend, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families often find that these are not recognised or valued by teachers or by schools (MCEETYA 2000). The lack of cultural support can make boarding schools in Australia difficult places to navigate. As Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) states, boarding school:

does not work for everyone. For many young people...travelling away from family and community life to pursue school is an insurmountable obstacle. Loneliness and isolation from family and community is extreme. The transition from community life to boarding school is extremely challenging – and often little or no support is provided to the young person or their family back home to make the transition. Dropping out and ceasing study is the only option (NPWYC 2014, p. 12).

Despite a lack of evidence regarding Indigenous boarding outcomes, Indigenous education foundations, Australian governments as well as individual schools are providing a growing numbers of scholarships toward increasing Indigenous enrolments in urban boarding schools across Australia (Cape York Partnership 2015; Australian Indigenous Education Foundation 2015a; Yalari 2015). While community concerns have been voiced in response to the national parliamentary inquiry into the experiences of Australian Indigenous boarding students, the voices of Aboriginal students are non-existent in the literature. This is the research gap this research sits within.

I have broadly outlined the historical context for the research within this thesis by discussing Indigenous boarding in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, using the metaphor of a cloak, to describe the interconnectedness of the past, present and future. I have also outlined the need for research into Indigenous boarding experiences. It has been noted that meaningful research happens only occurs when students are involved as 'equal partners and designers...to determine the research agenda, formulate questions, conduct research, and analyze results' (Education Alliance 2004, p. 6). In order to highlight Indigenous student voice regarding boarding school experiences, I created a new Indigenous method, which I call photoyarn, because while undertaking Indigenous research, 'you are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments... instead you should be fulfilling your relationships around you' (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 outline how this method was used in this study.

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CHAPTER 3

Method and methodology

As this thesis enters discussion regarding the research process, I start by respectfully sharing a story from Anishinaabe woman, Krystal Summers (2013). I am re-sharing her words because her research process and knowledges connect and relate to those I followed in this work:

If writing is a form of storytelling, then let me tell you a story. Writing from a space that strategically mingles... narrative wanderings with academic prose, I exist on the margins, outside the margins, and perhaps without a clearly defined margin... explore, (de)construct, (re)affirm and (re)position my experiences in Indigenous-centred research through an Indigenous lens... My knowledge and understanding is continually growing... I feel the knowledge in my body... knowledge is part of my way of being... as an Anishinaabe woman; it is part of who I am...

Indigenous expression of research is always connected to the broader understanding of the process as a whole: ways of doing (practices and protocols) are pursued based on the values we honour and live by, our relationships and our personhoods as Indigenous peoples—our ways of being... an Indigenous research paradigm... is guided... strengthened by each of its components, which cannot be explicated from one another. Data analysis in an Indigenous research process does not exclude acknowledging spiritual influences and experiences having occurred before, during or after the research process... There is no uncomplicated conclusion to my research processes and therefore, to this academic prose. The knowledge and reflections that are born from my research experience are unbound and intertwined... Storytelling as an Indigenous methodology does not require citations to secure its legitimacy as a reputable source of knowledge... Personal experiential knowledge... is to be respected as a valid form of data expression... As an Indigenous researcher, I feel it is my responsibility to share part of my research story with you... This sharing of a story does not propose to tell the story of an 'other', rather it aims to respect the relationships I have engaged in... I want to put forth to the academic

community a writing that reflects my knowledge... undertaking research within the academy, I am expected to publish on the outcomes of the research endeavour... I have realised that sharing a story... is a powerful source of knowledge exchange (p. 1-9).

This thesis is a collection of stories, from students in Australia and students in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is also my story. The research in this study was based on Indigenous research principles and practices, underpinned by relatedness theory (Martin 2003). Summers (2013) introduced how Indigenous research is experienced both personally and deeply. This chapter outlines the Indigenous method and methodology employed in this research and relatedness theory as the theoretical underpinning - the lens through which all aspects of this work might be understood in relation to one another.

Indigenous research

Indigenous research has been described as honouring what is meaningful and important to Indigenous people and communities, while involving Indigenous people throughout the research process. Privileging Indigenous voices is essential in Indigenous research (Rigney 1999). Inclusive decision-making, respect, the participation of Indigenous people, equal sharing of input and control, acknowledging and respecting Indigenous knowledge systems, and benefit for all who participate are fundamental aspects of Indigenous research (Smith 1999, 2000; Weber-Pillwax 1999; Cajete 2000), with participants agreeing upon the appropriateness of the objectives, procedures and ways in which data is interpreted and used (Eldridge 2008). An Indigenous approach to research requires a research framework that also encompasses Indigenous worldviews.

Graham (2009) states that Indigenous research practices should encompass Indigenous worldviews as an epistemological base. For Māori, research:

exercises tikanga Māori to guide the research, explicating the inseparable links between the supernatural, land and humanity. The concept of whakapapa is consequently the all-inclusive interweaving mechanism (Graham 2009, p. 2).

Whakapapa, genealogy and bloodline all inform Indigenous research in different contexts. Relatedness theory as applied to research also draws on what Graham (2009)

calls the supernatural, by giving research space for spiritual entities to inform the analysis:

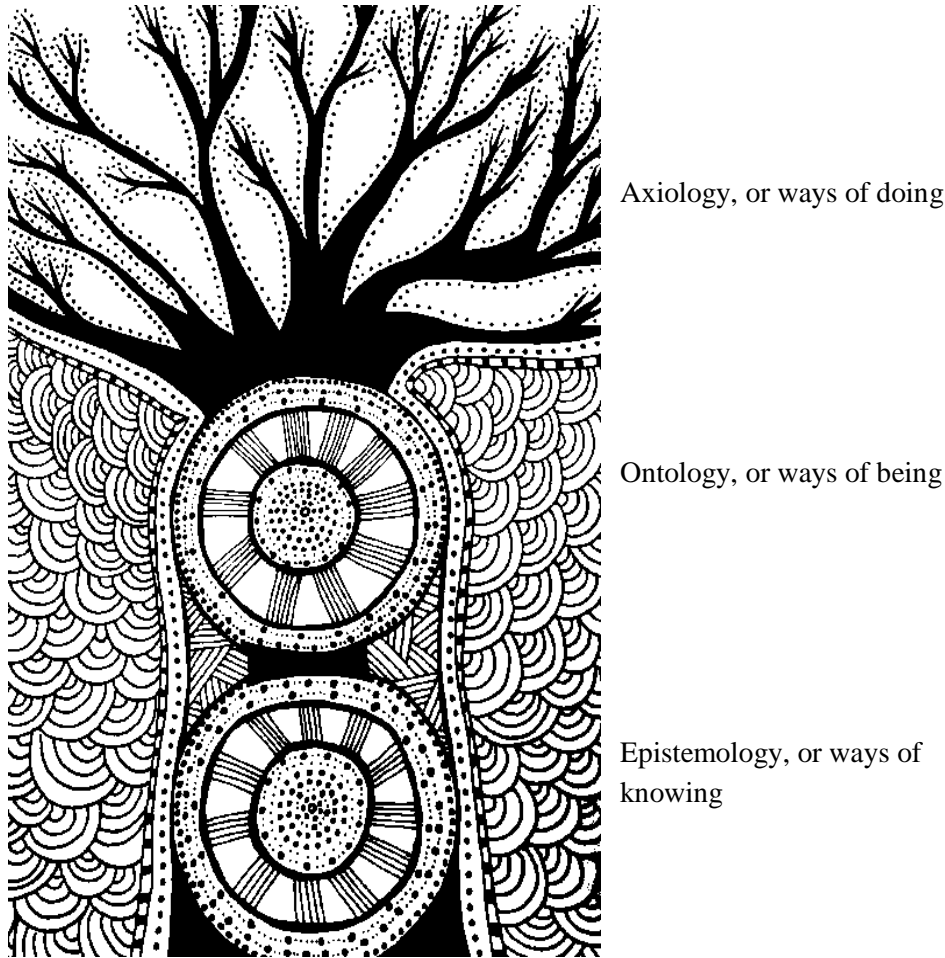
allowing these to tell the patterns within their own stories, in their own ways. It may also require the Indigenist researcher to watch and wait with patience as the interpretations and representations of these patterns emerge. This may occur as dreams, or in the form of words and pictures seen in our daily lives, which, generally, are not expected to carry messages...relations of research as processes for re-connecting the patterns...has less to do with capturing 'truth'...than the re-connecting of self, family, community and Entities (Martin 2003, p. 213)

I have used relatedness theory (Martin 2003) to inform how I would apply Indigenous research principles to this research with Aboriginal and Māori students in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and will discuss this later in this chapter.

Relatedness theory

Relatedness theory is framed by Aboriginal ontology, axiology and epistemology, or ways of being, ways of doing and ways of knowing (Martin 2003). Each interacts with the other in dynamic and flexible ways: Aboriginal ontology informs axiology and epistemology, and so forth. Aboriginal ontology is a relational ontology, with all things respected in their place within the overall system (Martin 2003). I will discuss how relatedness theory applies to this research, starting with a visual explanation of how I understand this theory relating to this research.

I drew Figure 1 as an understanding of relatedness theory informing my research at three levels, each connected and related to each other. Ways of being includes respecting the stories and ways of being I have been taught by elders in my life and in my work as a researcher, as well as knowing how I came to share in those knowledges: through relationships. As Martin (2003) describes, relatedness requires 'establishing identities, interests and connections to determine our relatedness' (p. 11), drawing on what we know, through elders and community, as proper ways of being (Martin 2003).



Drawing 1: Relatedness theory in this research

As an Indigenous researcher, I recognise that this research journey is ongoing, outside the scope of this PhD and even my own life cycle. The research decisions I make and actions I take are, like seeds of the gum tree, carried by wind and water reaching places I cannot know. Research has repercussions in the present and in the future, seen and unseen. That is my understanding of the relatedness of the work I share in this thesis. The research in this thesis was influenced by elders, who guide me as an Aboriginal educator and researcher through my daily and weekly interactions with them. Aboriginal ontology is learned and reproduced by Aboriginal people through sensing, listening, assessing, observing and applying (Martin 2003). It incorporates the contexts as well as the processes. What I know informs what I do, including research.

Aboriginal ontology, or ways of knowing, refers to such knowledges and the thoughts I have as an Aboriginal researcher. I *know* through knowledges that have been shared with me by ancestors spiritually, by elders and by community, and through lived experiences informed by relatedness and my relationships. Ways of knowing also include my ways of being, which include my own understandings of my Aboriginality, where I belong and the communities that have shaped my worldview as described in Chapter 1. Ways of being, including following Indigenous protocols, include knowing how I am related to those I worked with in this research. Ways of doing include the way I research and teach, a synthesis of my ways of knowing and ways of being as explained above – my ‘actions are a matter of subsequent evolvment and growth in our individual Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being’ (Martin 2003, p. 11). My actions in this study, which included consultation with Aboriginal community members and elders, and yarns with parents and families well before commencing the research, are my ways of doing. Within this study, my actions as a researcher are focused on ensuring the cultural safety of my participants, as well as my own. These ways of doing led me to develop the research method I named photoyarn, outlined later in this chapter and described in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Developing photoyarn allowed me to draw on Aboriginal ‘processes to articulate our experiences, realities and understandings. Anything else is an imposed view that excludes our ontology and the interrelationship between our Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing’ (Martin 2003, p. 12).

The theory of relatedness provided a strong framework for this research to privilege Indigenous student voices throughout the process. Martin (2003) states ‘we are able to show (Do), respectfully and rightfully (Being) what we know (Knowing)’ (p. 11) when we centre our work on relatedness. My research principles, underpinned by relatedness, are outlined below, as they were given to each school and student I worked with in this research:

Ways of Being:

In researching with other Indigenous people, I will first yarn with them to uncover connections we have, and to explain my cultural background, in order for them to place me within our broader system of relatedness. I will contribute respectfully to the communities I work with, and will respect cultural protocols particular to the places and people I am with (Martin 2003).

Ways of Doing:

I acknowledge the importance of Indigenous research being community-led, and, as such, my position as researcher is accountable to the communities with which I research. I will share responsibility and decision-making with participants during all stages of my research (Martin 2003), and discuss this research with community leaders and Elders connected to those researching with me.

Ways of Knowing:

I understand that the research I facilitate is able to have the most impact when the results are translated for decision-makers, including educators and policymakers, who hold power at levels where this work can make a difference. I commit to conveying the student voices, concerns and themes from this research in ways that are accessible and applicable to the systems that control Indigenous education in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Participants in this research will maintain control of their data, and will lead all aspects of data analysis to ensure the highlighting of Indigenous student voice in this research. Relatedness theory informs my understanding that the connections made within this research will continue after the work of this project is complete. I commit to continuing to advocate for the families and people I work with, supporting their continued aspirations after this research is finished (Martin 2003).

Arts-based research

For Indigenous peoples across the world, art ‘is not a separate language, but rather the way we live’ (Kenny 1998, p. 77). Drawing on concepts of arts-based research as well as Indigenous research, photoyarn is a weave formed by fibres from these two complementary approaches, which cannot truly be separated when art is considered from an Indigenous point of view. Arts-based research draws on storytelling, past histories, the dreaming of futures and performing, and it affirms cultural practices (Grierson & Brearley 2009). Arts-based research is not restricted by aims of scientific measurement or traditional research expectations, and should not be evaluated by such standards (Barone & Eisner 2011). It does not neatly sit within any other research paradigm, such as participatory action, community-based, interpretivist, anthropological or ethnographic research (Conrad & Beck 2015).

Arts-based research draws on multiple paradigms, acknowledging there are many ways of knowing, through creating, embodiment, feelings, intuition and even spirit, making it highly complementary to Indigenous research. At the core of arts-based research are the concept of relationality, the process of being together, and collective understanding and meaning-making between two or more individuals (Conrad & Beck 2015).

International research has shown that Aboriginal school programs that include arts can lead to increased self-esteem and improved academic achievement,

attendance, retention and literacy levels (Bell 2004). Castleden, Gavin and Huu-ay-aht First Nation (2008) describe arts-based research as valuable to Indigenous people, and to the process of ‘information-gathering and policy-making as well as providing archival documents for future generations’ (p. 1402). Indigenous research principles, as earlier discussed, assert the importance of epistemologies and ontologies that value Indigenous experience, and research methods that focus ‘on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians’ (Rigney 1997, p. 119). Arts-based research also encompasses these things. Informed by these approaches, I developed photoyarn as an arts-based Indigenous method for this research.

Developing the method: Photoyarn

While the method is best understood in Chapters 4 and 5 as it is described in action, this chapter explains how the seeds were planted toward growing my own method. Initially, I was drawn to Indigenous research, for its relevance to myself and as well as student participants as Indigenous women, and arts-based research, in its provision of ‘tools and opportunity for participants to perform inquiry, reflect on their performances, and preserve, create, and rewrite culture in dynamic indigenous spaces’ (Knowles & Cole 2008, p. 76). Because of my understanding that arts-based researchers are deeply connected to their participants and their research processes, arts-based research fits well with relatedness theory. As an Aboriginal researcher working with Indigenous students, I knew I would be heavily connected to the research, and I looked for a method that would strengthen this connection, rather than diminish it. I was acutely aware that my choice of method would ultimately influence the research journey of this study, as Kovach (2009) states:

Research choices, including the knowledge-gathering methods, sampling, and protocols... take on a particular character within Indigenous methodologies... we strive to incorporate methods, arrive at meaning, and present research in a manner that is congruent with Indigenous epistemologies and understood by the non-Indigenous community... Who we are as researchers cannot help but influence our choice of epistemological framework and theoretical lens, and it follows that this will influence the choice of methods... The partiality towards a particular method has bearing on the personal, social and cultural construct of the researcher's experience... there can be no denying that method preference is influential in determining the research journey (Kovach, 2009, p. 121-123).

Smith and Simpson (2014) describe the ability of Indigenous scholars to draw on aspects of Western research methods, engaging these to create Indigenous research

that is aimed at Indigenous people. ‘Intellectual sovereignty requires not isolationism but intellectual promiscuity’ (p. 9). As such, I looked not only at existing Indigenous methods but also to Western research methods as potential tools for this work. Teaiwa (2014) describes the process of engagement with Western research practices and methods as an act of sovereignty rather than assimilation, ‘since it represents Native peoples choosing their intellectual genealogies’ (p. 19). I was comfortable in this sense to borrow from non-Indigenous research methods, especially those with ‘compatible intellectual and political goals’ (Teaiwa 2014, p. 12), such as photovoice. In the end, I could not find a method that was, in its entirety, all I was looking for. The result was the development of photoyarn, an arts-based Indigenous method I created to meet my goal of giving Indigenous students attending boarding schools a voice in the literature.

The Western research method that most heavily influenced the development of photoyarn, was photovoice. Photovoice, a revision of ‘photo novella’ (Wang & Burris 1994), is described as a qualitative, participatory and visual research method. The method involves participants being given cameras to take photographs on topics relevant to their lives. Participants are interviewed about their images before their visual and qualitative data is analysed by the researcher. The results are discussed with the participant group to check for accuracy and disseminated in a number of ways.

Wang, Cash and Powers (2000) describe photovoice as ‘a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique’ (p. 82). However, even though it has been described as community-based and participatory research, participants do not ‘typically share decision-making power on the overall focus of the research’ (Catalani & Minkler 2009).

I was interested in whether photovoice might be a method that would allow the Indigenous students I was researching with to control their own research, in keeping with the theoretical underpinning and methodology of this study. Photovoice is a method that allows researchers a unique insight into the world of their participants, with its ability to ‘refract the colonial gaze by asking women to reveal the world as seen through their eyes. As such, research in the visual...through the women’s photography, is a useful orientation for illuminating the lived experience of Aboriginal women’ (Poudrier 2009, p. 309). As a method, photovoice is valued for its

ability to uncover ‘rich descriptive information... it is almost exclusively used to answer descriptive research questions, such as what is the collective and individual experience...’ (Catalani & Minkler 2009, p. 441). Photovoice appeared to be well suited to the research question of this work. I looked at Poudrier’s (2009) use of photovoice with a group of Aboriginal participants, researching their experiences with cancer. In the study, participants are reported as providing the:

most important interpretations of the photos and discussed key themes... interpretive processes, which always drew upon the participants’ own words and indications of what was meaningful to them...feminist epistemology with a focus on visibility and power, provided filters through which we collectively interpreted and thematized the stories and photos. Additional guidance for the analysis came from various writings on the use of visual methods in sociology (Poudrier 2009, p. 310).

Poudrier (2009) states that, as researcher, she used her own analysis process. First, she looked through participant images for information found within them; second, she examined the way in which content was presented in the images; and finally, she looked beyond the images themselves and included researcher views on the context, including social and cultural, which possibly shaped the creation of participant images (p. 310). While photovoice saw the participants collecting and discussing their own data (Poudrier 2009), data theming was led by the researcher, with independent coding followed by ‘team discussions surrounding the development of the themes, and finally, with the Aboriginal women in a sharing circle following the individual interviews’ (p. 310). Aboriginal participants were asked to provide feedback, rather than actually leading the analysis.

In photovoice, data analysis is controlled by the researcher. Participant interpretations of their own images do not lead the analysis of the data. As such, photovoice was not completely aligned with my methodology or goal of student-led research. Catalani and Minkler (2009) confirm that, although the method has developed significantly since its inception, ‘it is apparent that photovoice practitioners continue to grapple with the ideal of community participation in all stages of the research process’ (p. 440).

Although the data analysis process of photovoice needed modification, I was unsure if other parts of the method might work with Indigenous students. Maclean (2013) deems photovoice as culturally appropriate for Aboriginal participants, arguing:

[Photovoice] proved to be a powerful tool that revealed in-depth information including Aboriginal values, knowledge, concerns, and aspirations ...that may not have been captured through other participatory approaches. Photovoice methodology could be enhanced with a more defined role for the researcher as knowledge broker and as translator and communicator of research outcomes (as deemed appropriate by research participants) to policy makers (Maclean 2013, p. 94).

Maclean (2013) notes that, when participants are given a role in both the creation and analysis of their own images, the findings are often deeper and can more accurately reflect participant values and thoughts. I was looking for a method that gave my students control of the process, not just a role in the process. Photovoice has previously been employed in research regarding the experiences of Aboriginal health workers (Wilkin & Liamputtong 2010) and to encourage Aboriginal youth to participate in health awareness programs (Larson et al. 2001). Each of these studies found photovoice encouraged rich conversations, and produced data in ways that align with Aboriginal cultural practices, rooted in oral and visual meaning-making and sharing practices (Wilkin & Liamputtong 2010). While photovoice is reported to be an effective method for research with Indigenous peoples, the researcher plays:

a key role as knowledge translator and re-presenter. However, the very act of representation can disempower research participants if they are not active in the reporting process (for example, have a role to select the photographs) and if the researcher does not accurately portray their voices. For example, participants should be involved in a review of the final documentation. Equally, researchers must be mindful of...communication of research in a way appropriate to the community (Maclean 2013, p. 102).

It appeared the data analysis and dissemination processes of photovoice were not suitable for this research in their true form. I was mindful, while looking for a method, of my position as a PhD scholar required to produce a thesis and my own original research contribution. This was a difficult position to be in and essentially caused me to question whether one of my contributions could be the development of a new Indigenous, arts-based method using the applicable parts of photovoice. My subsequent development, photoyarn, started with the goal of giving student participants control over the research process, from data collection to data analysis through to participant-led dissemination.

In their review of 31 photovoice studies, Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan and Bardhoshi (2009) found that the majority of photovoice studies involved researchers analysing participant data, before they presented themes and findings to participants to

check for accuracy. Catalani and Minkler (2009) also found that only 27% of the 37 articles on photovoice they analysed had a high level of participation, with the size of the sample making no difference to participant levels of research participation. I began to conceptualise photoyarn as a method aimed at high-level participation. I examined how photovoice had developed over time mainly in Australian and indigenous settings worldwide. I considered my role as researcher as being a ‘knowledge translator’ (Maclean 2013, p. 103), but I also knew photoyarn would require data dissemination processes that could share the findings beyond the walls of the schools I would be working in alongside Indigenous students.

As a PhD candidate it was inevitable that I would be sharing student findings and personal experiences with audiences external to boarding schools, through a thesis, PhD presentations and so on. What photoyarn needed as a method was a way for the student findings to be disseminated by the participants themselves. Photography exhibitions are a popular method of dissemination in photovoice projects: ‘Researchers disseminate their findings from their photo voice projects...[and] organise exhibitions of the photographs that the participants have taken’ (Wilkin & Liamputtong, 2010). Streng et al. (2004) also note the use of a photographic exhibition, along with a community forum, as successfully giving participants an opportunity to ‘raise awareness of their themes’ (p. 412). Community exhibitions are described as ‘particularly important in researching Australian Aboriginal communities because it is important to have reciprocal and beneficial outcomes’ (Wilkin & Liamputtong 2010, p. 233).

I followed Wilkin and Liamputtong’s (2010) suggestion that a photographic exhibition, which presented the participants with the opportunity to share their experiences, would provide a way for communities to share in the research journey and to hear findings that could create change. As such, the photoyarn process culminates in a student-organised exhibition and forum, with student findings shared by students themselves in the learning communities they live in at boarding school.

With data dissemination processes considered, I revisited the data analysis method. I considered ways of modifying photovoice in ways that were in line with Indigenous research, toward allowing participant control of the method and process from start to finish. I re-examined the initial goals of photovoice listed by Wang and Burris (1997) and considered how they developed into four goals, discussed by

Carlson et al. (2006): to encourage discussion, to form a safe environment for discussion, to help empower people to take needed action in their lives or communities, and to allow participant ideas to be disseminated to a broader community toward real change. I looked at other modifications of photovoice, including Anishinaabe Symbol Based Reflection (Lavallee 2009), in which Indigenous sharing circles were combined with symbol-making processes to assist participants in sharing their stories. This inspired the inclusion of yarning circles in the photoyarn process, as a way for participants to analyse their own data. Yarning enables Aboriginal people to speak openly about their experiences and thoughts, as well as their ideas (Fredericks et al. 2011), while facilitating Indigenous ways of working and sharing knowledge (Martin 2012; Nakata 1997; Smith 1999). As Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) explain, when 'an Aboriginal person says "let's have a yarn", what they are saying is, let's have a talk or conversation' (p. 38). Aboriginal yarning is a 'fluid ongoing process, a moving dialogue interspersed with interjections, interpretations, and additions' (Gaia, Hayes & Usher 2013, p. 15). Further, yarning 'can meander all over the place....Like a conversation, yarning has its own convention and style in the telling of a story and can be messy and challenging' (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, p. 37).

Similar to yarning circles, hui are a Māori-centred form of group conversation. Lacey, Huria, Beckert, Gilles and Pitama (2011) describe the hui process as a framework for working effectively with Māori, a 'meeting or coming together...a central ritual of encounter in Te Ao Māori (The Māori world)... drawing on traditional knowledge and practice and aligning it to a contemporary situation' (p. 73). Like yarning, hui enable the sharing of stories. Stories enable Indigenous peoples to express their relatedness, as well as share knowledge. Martin (2003) explains that knowledge involves 'knowing your Stories of relatedness (Ways of Knowing) and respecting these Stories (Ways of Being) and the ways this relatedness is then expressed (Ways of Doing)' (Martin 2008, p. 63). Storytelling, known as yarning in Aboriginal society (Gaia, Hayes & Usher 2013, p. 14), was adapted into hui, encompassing whakawhiti kōrero (the exchanging of conversation) or whakawhiti whakaaro (the exchange of ideas or thoughts) within the Māori context in this research.

Aboriginal yarning circles are also referred to as group yarns. In recent years, Australian teachers have been introduced to yarning circles as methods that can be used in and outside of classrooms with students. Respectful yarning on a topic happens as the yarning circle sits or stands, with all voices valued and all people seen as equal participants:

the circular formation of the group, whether all standing or all sitting, means that children and the teacher can have eye contact with anyone in the circle, interpret facial expressions, and interact as part of a unified group. Through equal participation in this community practice, children learn to be responsive and aware of their physical relation and connectedness to others (Mills, Sunderland & Davis-Warra 2013, p. 287)

The inclusion of yarning circles as a space for participants to discuss, analyse, and theme their own images, toward deciding on major themes and findings for dissemination through their own student-led and organised exhibitions in their own school communities form the core of the photoyarn process, in contrast to photovoice analysis processes (where the researcher is responsible for codifying data, producing researcher-interpreted themes which are also disseminated by the researcher). It was my goal that all aspects of data collection, analysis and dissemination would be related and interconnected, just as the participants would be with each other and myself. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) explain that an important part of yarning circles is discovering the general consensus. In Indigenous ontologies, Indigenous people are not individuals separate from their communities, their histories or their relationships. Focusing on individual voices in Indigenous research therefore creates disconnection, rather than acknowledging the relatedness that connects Indigenous people and their knowledges. By incorporating yarning circles in the photoyarn method, data analysis occurs in a group yarn, encouraging connections and community voices to emerge from the group. Individual analysis processes, on the other hand, would not:

culturally match with Indigenous cultures. In broad terms there are dichotomies of values between non-indigenous and Indigenous in the areas of adversarial versus consensus decision making, individual presenting issue versus holistic based approaches... and an individual or immediate family versus cultural and communal understandings... [we] need to understand the relationship of the researcher to the community... This means being aware of where the researcher sits in terms of power and culture. We therefore need to ask the question, 'who 'owns' the research'... it must be community owned and community driven. Appropriate research methods need to blend Indigenous and non-indigenous methodologies (Bamblett, Harrison & Lewis 2010, p. 13).

I argue that photoyarn, as one of my main research contributions, responds to Wang and Pies (2004) who argue ‘photovoice requires a new framework and paradigm in which participants drive the analysis- from the selection of their own photographs they feel are most important...to the “decoding” or descriptive interpretation of the images’ (p. 100-101). Photoyarn sits firmly within an Indigenous paradigm, where knowledge is understood as ‘belonging to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge’ (Wilson 2008, p. 38). As a method, photoyarn recognises that the research experiences shared between participants and researcher are deeply connected by drawing on the power of traditional Aboriginal yarning processes, which encompass:

memories of the past, those that have gone before, the worries for the future, for the children, grandchildren and the grandchildren of their grandchildren... resistance to accepting the colonisers’ ways and at times acceptance of the colonisers’ ways. There is the remembering of the complex cultures with a compendium of knowledge, times when women were so very, very strong, and times when women were empowered within their own nations. There are processes in place that ensure we remember to remember (Fredericks 2003, p. 358-359).

Yarning, as the central process of photoyarn, respects Indigenous worldviews and the fact that the experiences shared in this research by students are intimately connected to the past, the present and the future through Dreaming. The photoyarn method is more fully described in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The second aspect of photovoice that I evaluated was the use of student photography. Digital photography, using mobile phones, is popular with young people in Australia. I looked into photography more deeply, and in the medium of a yarn, I wish to share with the reader the story of how I came to understand the photos that students would take as much more than simply images to speak to. This yarn is important, as I weave the cloak of understanding in this thesis between all interconnected and related parts. One of the main influences on my use of photography in the development of photoyarn was Geismar’s (2016) work on digital images and korowai. Geismar (2016) states that complex energy networks can be created within digital photography for Māori, with ‘wairua, or spiritual energies, channelled in Māori relationships... as simultaneous links to the past, present and future’ (Geismar 2016, p. 305). Using the example of images of a korowai, Geismar (2016) explains that images of sacred and special objects can hold the wairua of the object itself, with digital photographs:

instantiating a complex, social network that forges a powerful experience of co-presence. This perspective builds on both contemporary theories of (digital) photography and social media...and on Māori worldviews that understand people and things (including images) as interconnected, perpetually drawn into webs of relationship filled with cosmic, spiritual, political and social energy (p. 305).

This concept, connected with my work in multiple ways, describes the power of images taken by indigenous students in this study. The wairua and spirit these student images hold cannot be fully understood without considering what Geismar (2016) calls co-presence, or connectedness; with all the spiritual, political, social, cosmic energy of the past present and future. Using the example of a digital image of a korowai, Geismar explains:

Māori cloaks are considered to be ancestral forms...great cultural treasures (*taonga*) imbued with ancestral power, *mana* (spiritual authority) and *wairua* (spiritual efficacy and energy)...[the modern artist] decided to...(re)create a provenance for the cloak and to reactivate the spiritual pathways, the *wairua*, that all Māori *taonga* instantiate....[an] exploration of the capacities of digital technologies to encode Māori values...within new representational and relational frameworks...The initial question framing the process...was “Can you wear a digital cloak?” (2016, p. 308).

This concept, of wearing a digital cloak, is a powerful one. The question being asked is essentially one of how far relatedness actually travels, and whether spiritual connections can be formed through digital pathways, in addition to spiritual and physical paths. Geismar (2016) considers cloaks as physical markers of stories and histories, which exist within the histories of the cloak (through the history of the cloak, and the weaving process) but, these histories being re-enacted (through the cloak also being worn in the present) creating new, interlinked and related memories and histories. Geismar (2016) extends on visual sovereignty toward what I would label ‘digital sovereignty’, that is, the use of digital channels to convey and share the qualities which historical, physical *taonga*, including cloaks, artwork and photographs, are imbued with. Geismar (2016) recognises ‘digital communication as channels for social and spiritual relationships. The visual component of the digital image...one part of a broader field, not simply representational, but...of co-presence’ (p. 313). Acknowledging digital photographs as being able to create pathways for spiritual co-presence in places across time and space provides a deeper understanding of the power of digital images. Photographs, in this way, are not simply captures of past moments,

but act instead as windows to ‘co-presence’, bringing the viewer and photographer alongside each other, the wairua/spirit imbued within the moment or object in the photograph connected across time, place and space:

Māori theories of digital images use the relational and translational qualities of digital media to formulate and represent a worldview...that links the material and immaterial, the past and the present...not simply as an image of it but as an active participant in its fabrication. Māori discourses understand weaving as a process that is both technological and cosmological. The Māori terms for weaving map onto terms that describe genealogical connection and ancestral power. The phrase *To kanoi* means both to weave and to trace ancestry, and cloaks were used traditionally at key lifecycle events including both birth and death...Cloaks are described as objects that warm both the body and the heart. Indeed, woven objects around the world are used as metaphors of relationality...The “woven world” draws together disparate components of warp and weft into a cosmological and material whole... the significance and power of cloaks is their metaphorical and literal association with relationships, both in the present and traced back through ancestral time (Geismar 2016, p. 315-316).

This yarn illustrates how I came to understand that photographs allow the weaving of stories, futures, pasts, and experiences into the present; connecting people and places with objects across time and space, known in te reo Māori as ‘*wā* ...the word for time and/or space’ (Middleton & Mackinley 2009, p.3). With the connection between photographs and yarning firmly sewn in my mind, I also took time to consider how this method would be applied in the Māori context compared with my Aboriginal context. I return to the yarn describing how the method developed as I moved between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Flexibility and modification of photoyarn

Langton (1993) states, ‘Aboriginal cultures are extremely diverse and pluralistic. There is no one kind of Aboriginal person or community’ (p. 11). Each participant who uses Indigenous methods uses them in their own way, and each Indigenous researcher works in a different way, based on their own relationships and connectedness to participants. So is the case with photoyarn. For these reasons, Indigenous research methods must remain flexible to adjust to the particular communities and participants they are used by, and with.

I altered photoyarn to work with Māori students, as described in Chapter 6. The photoyarn method needed modification to work with Māori students in a cultural environment in which I was visitor, or *manuhiri*, ensuring ‘maintenance of relatedness through the phases, fluctuations and the tensions of the physical-social-emotional-

historical-economic-cultural realities of each research context' (Martin 2008, p. 139). I termed the modified method *kōreropikitia*. While based on the same concepts as photoyarn, it included a heavier focus on *kanohi ki te kanohi kōrero*, a concept similar to yarnning face-to-face. I modified photoyarn to suit the students at College A and at College B as described in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, as each school setting had its own community needs. The size of the two research groups, for example, meant that photoyarn was used differently at each boarding school site.

At Colleges A and B, social media was included in the process to allow students an avenue of conversation while I was not at the school. A growing body of literature shows the power of youth media and communication tools (e.g. social media, the internet, digital photography) to promote community development and social activism (Strack, Magill & McDonough 2004). The last decade has seen a rapid rise in the use of social media as a means of cultural and social interaction among Aboriginal people, with social media 'becoming an everyday, typical activity' (Carlson 2013, p. 147). Social media and digital technologies are used by youth worldwide to create and maintain social networks (Montgomery, Gottlieb-Robles & Larson 2004). The participants in this research were familiar and comfortable with the use of mobile phone photography as well as social media communication. Photography has been found to be successful as a research tool: when secondary school students were provided with the option of using the camera on a mobile phone, their images were found to stimulate discussion (Tinkler 2013). As a tool for prompting discussion, the relative ease and minimal time needed to gather digital photographs was favourable for students who had study commitments to maintain.

Social media was effective in photoyarn as a way for students to share images and maintain connection while I was not on school campus, and while they were apart during school holidays. Tafler states that 'in a world where going away means growing away, remote communities can now plug into an evolving ... network without their members leaving the family or land' (2000, p. 27). Digital technology is currently transforming modes of communication for Aboriginal people, who are increasingly expressing themselves and their cultures online (Kral and Schwab 2012). Edmonds et al. (2012) argue that social media is beneficial in providing such opportunities for Indigenous young people to explore and express their identity. Johnson and Oliver (2014) conducted a study with 24 Aboriginal adolescents (15 male

and 9 female) attending a boarding school in Western Australia, in which Aboriginal boarders were interviewed about their use of small-screen devices, such as mobile phones. The authors found evidence of a rapid uptake of mobile phones by Indigenous adolescents, and that mobile phones have the potential to be utilised for educational opportunities. Their findings regarding m-learning (mobile phone usage for educational purposes) supported the use of mobile phones as a tool in this study. The authors state, 'm-learning may represent the way forward for Indigenous adolescents in remote regions ... enabling Indigenous educators to meet the challenge of incorporating m-learning with their often extremely remote classrooms' (p. 18).

I decided to suggest mobile phone photography as a way for the boarding students to gather visual data, initially in a yarning circle at College A, the first research site. While some comments from students expressed their worry that they were not 'photographers', once the use of camera phones (rather than handheld cameras) was discussed among the group, students were confident taking images, in line with Flicker et al. (2008), who state:

One has only to observe the use of cell phones, iPods, blogs and instant messaging to see that for many youth, technology is a seamless part of how they conduct their lives... This technological fluency presents a unique opportunity to appeal to youth culture and engage youth (p. 286).

Social media and technology were effective in engaging Indigenous youth in this study, and provided them with multiple ways to express themselves. Photoyarn as a method allowed and encouraged Indigenous women in this study to research their experiences, using familiar media (mobile phone photography, social media sharing), while yarning allowed the young women to come together as a group to discuss their findings. The use of photography among young people, teenage girls and minority groups has been shown in other research to give 'voice through photos to people who might not ordinarily have the opportunity to convey their perspectives on important issues' (Necheles et al. 2007, p. 211), including indigenous peoples globally. The success of photoyarn as a method was reliant on its ability to allow student voice to be at the centre of this research. The purpose of the method was to enable the discussion of the experiences of boarding to come from those who are at the centre of the experience. Yarning allowed the students in this study to lead conversations about their images without the formality of being interviewed (Fletcher et al. 2011). Student

voice would have been harder to glean with voices of others (such as parents, school leaders, staff, teachers, elders) speaking from their own points of view.

Photoyarn's adherence to Indigenous research protocols enabled students to have control of the research process. The yarnning process in photoyarn allowed us, as Indigenous women, to form relationships (as per relatedness theory) to drive the research. The power of the yarnning circles was not limited to the meanings of images or personal experiences. Initial yarns across all three sites included discussion and training about research to demystify the process. Learning about research, Indigenous research, and this particular method encouraged students to begin to see themselves as researchers, with the power to speak up on what they were experiencing, toward an exhibition that would give them voice with those who held power in their lives as boarders: school staff, parents and policymakers. Slimming, Orellana and Maynas (2014) completed their research with photography exhibitions in the three indigenous communities with whom they had researched. They found that this method left participants feeling satisfied and with a sense of ownership over the research outcomes (p. 126). As such, the photoyarn method was developed as part of a research plan that would allow students to hold student-led photography exhibitions, giving them opportunities to raise awareness with those who influenced their lives within schools, amplifying their voices and opening pathways for change in the school environment.

Developing a research plan

When creating my research plan, the metaphor of weaving a dilly-bag came to me. A dilly-bag is an Indigenous woven bag traditionally used to carry objects, possessions, tools and food. I envisaged photoyarn as a tool that would be retained by participants, a skill for them to take forward in their lives, to carry and use as they wished. The photoyarn process is described in this thesis in relation to the stages of weaving a dilly-bag, this process forming a plan for research at each site. Table 1: The photoyarn method presents an outline of the research process.

Photoyarn Method



Gathering Grasses

- Researcher meets with the community that research is going to happen with
- Participants interested in doing research on a topic related to their lives are gathered together
- Student sample is selected
- Students meet with researcher
- Broad focus topic is discussed
- Participants choose potential audiences the project will speak to

Preparing the Fibres

- Yarning circles formed to share stories and look for connections through relatedness
- Photoyarn method is discussed, including its purposes
- Informed consent gathered from those in the project
- Relationships are formed with the students, and connections made, through yarning
- Stages of the research method are outlined
- Researcher reads through forms with students, and gathers any other consent from parents, school or guardians

Learning to Weave

- Researcher and participants discuss ethics of the project and of photography
- Researcher checks that all participants have access to camera phones
- Students learn basic photography skills and social media basics
- Groups discuss angles, lighting,
- Ethics of the project are explained, including not taking images of people's faces, and privacy considerations of the school and individuals (staff and others)
- Researcher checks all students are on Facebook, forms a private Facebook group, and makes sure all students are members and know how to find the

symbolism and ideas of how to take photographs of things they can't find, using metaphor

group

- Group discusses basic online safety and etiquette

Weaving Together

- Group decides together on the theme for the project
- Yarning circle discusses the topic and aspects that might be explored through photos
- Over several days, students think about the topic and take 10 to 15 images on their phones that explore their thoughts
- Students upload photos to the Facebook group

Finishing the Dilly-bag

- Images are explained in yarns between photographers and researcher
- Yarning circle held to share all images and to organise them into themes
- Theming of all gathered data as a group in yarning circle, and decisions made about major themes and best images that represent the themes for an exhibition
- Researcher writes up the results for use by participants, their communities and others
- Researcher records yarns and compiles transcripts
- Yarning data is grouped into themes with students
- Yarning circle, where researcher checks any independent ideas with the group
- Students organise an exhibition aimed at the audience selected earlier, celebrating their achievements and sharing their message

Table 1: The photoyarn method

In the photoyarn process, photographs are analysed in a yarning circle: the images are grouped into themes according to the group's interpretation, until consensus is reached. The same process occurs with the textual data: quotes from the yarns are grouped according to topic or theme, with the participants reading their typed quotes provided by the researcher, deciding upon the meaning of each quote, and then grouping the quotes into themes. The same process is followed for the images. After incorporating the image themes with the textual themes, the main themes from the student-led research emerge.

The final step of the photoyarn process involves the opportunity for the researcher to look over all data, if there is more than one research group involved in the broader project, such as this thesis (with Colleges A, B and C forming the three research communities). The researcher's commitment to stay connected to all the

others in the project means that any results from this step must be taken back to the research communities for discussion by all participants, to ensure shared control.

Once the final decision is made on the themes that have emerged, the group decides on the selection of images they believe best exemplify the major themes. These images are then used in an exhibition aimed at the audience chosen by the group at the beginning of the research process. The choice of an audience (as outlined in Table 1), is an important step for the students, as this is where they have the opportunity to name those with power they wish to influence, or those they feel need to hear their voices and ideas. As mentioned earlier, the student exhibition provides an important chance for the participants to speak up to their community, but it also provides an opportunity to celebrate their work and to share a closing of the process as a small research community.

After the exhibition, the researcher writes up work outlining the results and the process, so that the research may be shared with those it was intended to speak to and is accessible to the broader community, including policymakers. This thesis is one such output of the photoyarn process decided upon by the groups at Colleges A, B and C.

As noted, flexibility was essential in modifying the process for use by communities according to their needs. This was the case with the Māori boarding students I worked with at College C. My understanding of the Māori context is that connection with land and others, through relationships (concepts of *turangawaewae* and *whanaungatanga*) encompasses social and physical relations, through genealogy (*whakapapa*). For Māori, *whakapapa* illuminates these ‘interconnections between people and their spiritual and physical connection to the land’ (Graham 2009, p. 2). Life for Māori is experienced through ‘sequenced networks of relationships (*whakapapa*) linking each entity and maintained by oral narratives and traditions’ (Graham 2009, p. 3). My modified version of photoyarn, termed *kōreropikitia*, was aimed at respecting the relatedness of *whenua*, *tupuna*, *kōrero*, *whakapapa* and *whanaungatanga*. Centring *kōreropikitia* on oral stories and the sharing of narratives, as well as on student photographs, provided a culturally sensitive way for me, as an Aboriginal woman, to research with Māori students as outlined in Chapter 6.

Shultz and Cook-Sather (2001) question the role of the researcher who is involved in student-led research, asking whether it is up to the adult to interpret

student voices and to synthesise student ideas into ‘adult appropriate’ forms of work, or whether student voices should be unrestricted and presented in their original form. Researchers offering recommendations for improving schools might be seen as muddying student-led processes. In this research, I was an active participant. While the students in this study conducted their own data gathering and analysis, I have included my own understandings and given recommendations in accordance with the literature available on the topics of importance, as well as distilling the messages that students decided were the most important in their work, in Chapter 7. As Martin explains, Indigenous researchers connected to their work must know their own:

Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing in order to be self-reflexive, and self-regulating...answer questions of ‘who they are’ and ‘where they come from’ not only in a physical sense, but an historic, political, societal, gender, professional, cultural, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual sense...Thus the Indigenist researcher retains autonomy whilst coming to understand the inter-relatedness of the research (Martin 2008, p. 138-139).

This autonomy was also afforded to the students at each of the three boarding schools in this study through a photoyarn research output which students controlled completely: their exhibitions, at which they spoke directly to their chosen audiences.

The method and methodology of this work have been introduced in this chapter. The following chapters will outline the process undertaken at each research site. The stories and voices expressed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 do not exist simply within the pages of this thesis. As Kwaymullina, Kwaymullina and Butterly (2013) explain:

Aboriginal stories, however expressed or embodied, hold power, spirit and agency. Knowledge can never be truly separated from the diverse Countries that shaped the ancient epistemologies of Aboriginal people, and the many voices of Country speak through the embodiment of story into text, object, symbol or design (p. 5).

I encourage the reader to reflect on the following chapters, and the student voices they highlight, as deeply connected to country and culture through relatedness. Mātauranga Māori ‘recognizes the interrelatedness of all things... imbued with a life force (mauri) and a spirituality (tapu)’ (Solomon 2005, p. 222). The text and images of the students in this study are imbued with mauri and the mana of those who produced them, amplifying student voices which flow ‘from the same source: the relationship between people and their land, their kinship with other living creatures... manifestations of the same underlying relationships’ (Daes 1997, p. 3). I recognise that no object created by

90 •

Indigenous peoples can ever truly be separated from their cultures or lands (Semali & Kincheloe 1999) and that therefore this thesis is a special and powerful document holding living expressions of the boarding school experiences of Aboriginal and Māori girls.

CHAPTER 4

College A

Located in a large Australian capital city, College A caters to girls in years 7 to 12, aged 12 to 18 years of age. The ethos and curriculum is shaped around Catholic and social justice values, including hope, justice and respect. All Indigenous boarders at College A have full boarding scholarships provided by one external scholarship fund. Thirty Indigenous students were enrolled at College A in 2015, equal to 5% of the total student population. Twenty Indigenous students were boarding, equal to 39% of the total boarding house population. I contacted more than twenty Australian girls' boarding schools with active Indigenous programs; College A was the only school that replied expressing interest in being involved in this research. I received email correspondence from the boarding house mistress, and after an initial phone conversation I was invited to College A for a meeting.

During our meeting, the boarding mistress stated that the coordination of the Indigenous program at College A was very much 'trial and error', noting that school leadership and teaching staff based their decisions on their own experiences, with little research or professional information available. Some of the key issues she signposted as being of interest to the college were racism, teacher–student relationships, the dynamic between Indigenous and non-Indigenous boarders, student retention in the face of family pressure to return home, and finding out what pressures had caused previous girls to return home before finishing year 12. In agreeing to this research, College A requested that all boarders who identified as Indigenous be invited to participate in the research. Letters were sent home to each Indigenous boarder's parents or guardians with information about my background as the researcher, all

required paperwork on the ethics of the research, a letter of support from the school, and an opt-out slip to be returned if the parents or guardians did not want their daughter to participate. All families were also contacted by the school via phone, ensuring parents were happy for their students to engage in the research and knew what the project would be about.

Gathering grasses

My second visit to College A was to meet the Indigenous boarders who had agreed to participate in the research. Twenty-five students arrived for the first meeting. The boarding mistress had briefed all the girls about the project the week before, and they had received some information that explained that the focus of the research would be on Indigenous girls' experiences in boarding schools. Some of the students had also discussed the paperwork sent home to their families. Prior to my first session with the students, I was greeted by the boarding mistress and College A's Indigenous support officer, Mirri, who also worked as a boarding house mother for all year 10 boarders (including non-Indigenous boarders) at College A. Mirri had also recently secured a contract as the school's Indigenous scholarship liaison officer for the external scholarship fund which funded all Indigenous boarders at College A, work she did on top of her role with the college.

Mirri, who was days away from graduating with a Bachelor of Education from a local university, instructed the students to settle down and the boarding mistress introduced me to the girls, recapping a few behavioural expectations before leaving. We sat in silence for a little while before I felt it was my time to speak. I opened the yarn by acknowledging country, and then introduced myself in order for students to make any connections we may have had. Each student introduced herself, including where she was from, and her cultural background. No students at College A were from the communities I had previously lived or worked in. The 25 students in the group at College A ranged between 12 and 17 years of age and were in years 7 to 12.

After introductions, we yarned about research. I explained to students that the aim of my particular research project was to hear Indigenous girls' voices in order to gain a better understanding of their boarding school experiences. In that first yarn, several students wanted to know why I had picked College A to visit and to invite to this research. Students also asked questions about me as an Aboriginal woman, my university studies, where this research would end up, who would know about it, and

why I had decided to do a PhD. Some students asked what a PhD was. I shared my answers, and asked some of my own questions, including what their hopes were in being involved in the project, why they had said yes to participating, and what they understood about research. We discussed the topic of boarding schools as an area that had not been well researched. Some students asked what photographs they would be taking, as the boarding house mistress had mentioned that they might be researching with photos. The girls were very keen to tell me about their experiences taking photos and especially how they loved sharing their images via social media. Several students mentioned that sharing photos on social media helped keep their families back home in the loop, and seeing images on Facebook helped them feel as if they were a part of things while they were separated from their families at boarding school. At College A, the 25 students participating in this study were all engaged in social media, and each of them had access to at least one mobile device throughout the day. I asked if the participants would like to use digital cameras or their mobile phones to record the images for this research, and all agreed they would rather use their mobile phones. I agreed there was no necessity for separate cameras to be used.

We further discussed what aspects of boarding school they particularly wanted to research, and the group consensus was simply ‘boarding school’, which, although broad, was the outcome of the yarn. Some students asked if they could use filters, edit images, use lighting, effects and crop images using applications they had on their smart phones. I was keen for the girls to express themselves however they liked and agreed they should create images in whatever way suited them. We yarned about who they wanted this research to speak up to – who they hoped would read, see and hear their voices through their research. Some of the younger students answered ‘teachers’ and ‘the principal’. A senior student mentioned the Prime Minister, and others said ‘the government’. Overall, students decided that they wanted ‘the school’ to hear what they had to say, and this was the chosen audience for the project.

Preparing the fibres

Prior to my first meeting at College A, I had recently received approval from the Australian National University Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct research. Throughout the ethics application process, working in a school with young Aboriginal women was highlighted as presenting a number of risks, both to the students, and myself as researcher. I explained to the students that there were some

important aspects of the research we needed to yarn about, and outlined my reporting requirements including what would happen if they disclosed information that indicated they were at risk of harm or of harming others. I also told them the topics, such as suicidal thoughts or thoughts of harming other people of themselves, which I would need to report to their school. I gave the students the names of people in the school who were already aware of the project and were available to talk to students if anything in the research process brought up feelings they needed to talk to someone about. In the same yarn we covered ethical guidelines such as obtaining consent to take a person's photograph. We discussed the school privacy policy that prevented the students from taking images of other students at the school. I distributed the consent forms as well as the information sheets and read through them with the students to ensure they understood all parts of what participating in this research meant, including how data would be stored. We discussed how group yarning circles would be recorded, and would require trust and respect as people would be sharing their own views and feelings. I also believed it was an essential part of the research to ask students to sign a participation agreement to be part of the research, giving them the agency to sign their own consent forms.

Because of my background and training as a drama teacher, I am familiar with classroom practices that involve students sharing their thoughts and feelings as well as reactions to other people's thoughts. My training also included how to close off conversations that might lead to disclosures that students, both those speaking and listening, may find traumatic or harmful. These skills I brought to the yarns in my research with College A, and later Colleges B and C, however I discussed the concept of students talking about things that might upset them before any research took place. We also discussed how a lot of the research would involve yarning circles, and for those who were unfamiliar with this concept, other students added their own understandings of what this could look like. I explained to the students across the three sites why yarning circles had been included in photoyarn, not only because they are an Indigenous method, but because:

When we sit in a circle we experience a stronger sense of community. Every person in the circle shares responsibility for its functioning. Circle culture is more "yes-and" than "either-or." *Yes*, there is a leader, *and* each person takes the lead in turn, each time it is their turn to speak. *Yes*, some guidelines are given *and* the group makes its own agreements. Decisions are made, but by consensus of the whole group, and sometimes this means decisions come

slowly or take unexpected forms. Thus, one of the main purposes of circle dialogue is building community. Another purpose is supporting the kinds of honest, authentic dialogue that is necessary to effectively respond to challenging behavior and circumstances (Clifford 2013, p. 9).

Before research began at each site, a discussion with the research community, involving the student participants of that site, was held in a yarning circle. The foundation of these yarns was an agreement that all voices would be heard, that all people are equal regardless of whether we agreed with each other, and that yarning circles were a place to trust and feel supported by each other. Because I did not have time before the research to connect with students, this process was one that I also had to place trust in. I did not know if the students would follow these agreements.

All students had signed and returned their forms by the end of session 2. In this session, the research community at College A had narrowed to twenty students: two students in year 7 and three students in year 8 decided not to continue as they felt the project would require too much on top of their study load. I explained photoyarn was a developing method, and that it involved taking photographs, as well as yarning about these photographs and their experiences. In this session, students began to yarn about their experiences:

I come in year 9, and... it was kind of hard for me, because I'd never been to boarding school... and I'd never been away from my parents. It was kind of hard because I'm very family-orientated. Being away from family was so hard, I would cry so hard every night.

The student sitting next to her added:

I came to this school in year 7, and I found it very hard, very lonely... I didn't know anybody. It was very hard as well because I was used to always being with my mum. My family were always around. Getting picked up from school all the time by my grandparents to not going home in the afternoons... so, yeah.

Many girls nodded in agreement that they had experienced feelings of isolation, loneliness and homesickness in their first weeks at boarding school.

The group, without prompting, had entered into a yarn about boarding and appeared comfortable sharing these experiences with me, which I felt relieved about. A senior student in that yarn explained that being away from her parents and family was one of the most difficult experiences about moving to boarding school:

I came in year 7 and I'm in year 10 now... so four years. The hardest thing was when I came and seeing my parents leave, and knowing that I'd never see them for, like, a whole term again. Going home and then having to leave them again was just really hard.

The difficulty in leaving their parents was apparent regardless of which year the students had started boarding school.

The hardest thing about boarding is not being able to see your family every day, you know, like, pets and family and the things you love most... Being away from home, not being able to go home. That's the worst thing about boarding school. Especially when it doesn't take very long to get home. My home is close to school and it doesn't take very long to get there.

The hardest experiences of boarding school brought up by students included not being able to go home every afternoon, and not being able to do what they wanted after school. Fifteen of the participants from College A were from regional and rural areas; five of the girls were from urban families that lived only a short drive from the suburb College A was in. I was interested in the decision local students were making to stay in the boarding house, when they could easily make their way home if they chose to. Several girls mentioned that they had known students at College A before they commenced boarding, commenting that this made the experience of moving to boarding school easier. Friends, sisters, cousins and other Indigenous students were all described as being helpful in making the transition to boarding school less painful.

Below I have included a direct excerpt of our yarning circle dialogue, maintaining the flow of the original conversation to allow the reader a sense of how students interacted with each other, and how they conveyed their messages as a group. This format juxtaposes a number of different voices, allowing the liveliness of the yarn to be preserved. Individual voices are not identified; in these conversations, the group was the focus, not the voices of individuals. My voice appears in bold.

When I first came here I had a sister who was here one year older than me, but I was still heaps scared and I didn't want to come. On the verge of, like... I was refusing to come, and Mum had to force me out.

I came here in year 7 and I only knew [another Aboriginal student] so I was scared... knowing someone made it easier, in getting to know the girls and that.

I came this year and I wasn't nervous at all 'cause I had a sister and a cousin that was already there, and... just helped me get used to boarding, and introduced me to the friends, neighbours and that, and that's how I got to know the girls in the older years, and the girls in my year. Just made me really comfortable.

Why did you choose this boarding school?

When I was in year 6, I come here, my sister was here. There was actually a lot of Koori girls here. In the older years. That's what got Mum's attention. Then when I come here that was all... gone. They went back home.

Yeah. We were gonna go to [other boarding school] 'cause my Dad's sister went there. We did all this stuff. There was no Koori kids... no-one. There was, like, one in year 12. Mum was like, 'Nup, you're not going there.' There was, like, when I went there I would be like the only one, so. And here, 'cause Mum knew [another Koori student] was here. 'Cause my aunty, she helped me get in to here. You know my aunty? Yeah, well, she said she said there was a lot of Koori kids.

I came because other family had been here or knowing someone here.

We went to the boarding exhibition and they sweet-talked my mum. [Laughter.]

That was like at home. The nun at home had connections with this school so she tried to get lots of girls to come here.

It was the schoolwork here.

Are there students in the boarding house here with you, from your hometowns and communities, girls that are non-Indigenous?

Yeah.

Yeah, there is.

They still don't try to talk to us or really connect.

I didn't know them before. I still don't really talk to them.

Even though you're from the same town?

Not really any connection there, not really.

With your scholarship, the school picks you. With other scholarships, the fund picks the students and then approaches schools. That difference – school picking you to come here – does that make you feel anything different?

Yeah. It's a good thing how we can choose the school and they accept us, rather than, like, it's almost like they sell students to schools and the students don't have much choice.

In this yarning circle, the boarders explained that they had come to find out about the scholarship fund in numerous ways, including by word of mouth, through a teacher or school staff member at their primary school, by seeing it in the newspaper or on the internet, or by College A telling them about the scholarship. To be eligible for the funding, however, Indigenous students had to board at the college, no matter how close to the school their families lived to the boarding school. The choice to attend College A did not appear to be influenced by its proximity to the homes or communities of the students.

Tell me about the activities you have through [scholarship fund].

We have mentoring and tutoring.

They are non-Indigenous people.

We don't have AIME [Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience]. I wish we did.

My brother has an AIME jacket. It's so good.

They have AIME at the school at home. Yeah... is really good. I wish we had it here.

Our mentors, well, they are there to support us. Like a parent-type figure.

'Cause girls from the country, 'cause their parents aren't here, it's like someone to talk to and they give you advice.

You can talk to them about culture and stuff, and they do ask you stuff.

Even though they're not Black.

They understand... even though they aren't Indigenous.

What about taking a non-Indigenous friend on [scholarship fund] activities?

Nah, never.

Never. Nope, we don't.

Would you like to?

Yes – I would.

Yeah.

Yeah, that would be good

It would be interesting.

Yeah, like, didn't we take some to Bangarra? Oh no, that was just us, just us, we went.

Yeah, they would find that interesting.

Some of them are just arrogant, they don't care.

Yeah, they don't care, they just... if they had the chance they wouldn't take it.

You know how some country towns are racist? Yeah, they probably come from some of those towns.

So, is this the closest boarding school to home?

No, it's not.

Um... I don't know if it is. It is close to my home, sort of. There could be another one that's closer, I'm not sure.

Yeah, it's close but I don't know if it's the closest.

It wasn't part of our choice why we came here.

I don't know if this is the closest to home.

Does that matter?

Not really, because if you are away, you are away. Doesn't matter how far.

Being far away and here, with so many people. A big change. Was that strange?

Sometimes.

Yeah, sometimes.

You're sharin' a room...

Yeah, you're sharing everything... [Laughter.]

Well for me, I get along with my friends, but for some people, they get real shame, you know?

Whenever you want time to yourself there, like, someone always... there.

Like you can't get away from anyone.

If you just wanna be yourself then kick back, they think you're sad.

Yeah!

And you're like, 'Nah, I'm just relaxing!' [Laughter.]

Chill out! [Laughter.]

Sharing everything with new people.

So many people... every day.

Sharing a room, school together...

Eating together.

Showering together!

Like even when you're on the toilet there's still people there! [Laughter.]

Nowhere to be alone!

Instead of boarding, who would choose to go to the school near their house if you could?

[Lots of laughter] No way!

*I would **not** go there!*

No way. School there sucks.

Teachers there are the worst. All we did was write down notes in our books off the board. I don't think I learned a single thing at that school.

Learning to weave

When I arrived at College A for our third session, the students had been discussing boarding since my last visit, and they were excited to get started taking photographs. I recapped the ethical considerations students needed to be aware of, especially noting restrictions on taking images of faces, due to the privacy rules of College A. I checked that all students had a camera phone, which they did. We looked again at the photoyarn process. After we yarned about the aims and purposes of photoyarn, all students agreed that this was a method they were happy to use for the

research. Some students again mentioned that they loved taking photos and sharing them on Facebook to keep in touch with family and friends. At this time, a senior student recommended we create a closed Facebook group to share our images and conversations, and volunteered to set this up. With the group's approval, she created the group and invited us all to join. Within a few minutes, the girls were already on their phones and checking into the group online.

As a group we yarned about online safety and netiquette, our community rules of engagement regarding interactions via the internet. The girls agreed it was important to maintain people's privacy. Nevertheless, students did ask how they might be able to photograph things that normally, a photo of a face would convey, such as emotions. We discussed ideas about how to use angles, lighting and colour to represent emotions and themes. Before discussing the research task for the week ahead, we yarned about what aspects of the boarding experience they might want to speak up about.

... I came to boarding school last year, and when I first came I was so nervous. But as soon as I walked through the door, these two Black girls started walking towards me, me and my mum, and started welcoming themselves. And then I was really nervous, when I went to my room, but then this girl, another Aboriginal girl... she invited me in her room and I remember we became, like, best friends in the first two minutes. We were sitting on the bed talking away and it was like I'd known her forever. And the Indigenous girls at this school I can't thank enough 'cause we're like family, it's really good.

The best thing about boarding is getting a really good quality education. It's like a new experience in life, and you meet new people. You build experiences with people who [you] wouldn't associate with outside.

Do you think boarding provides you good opportunities for the future?

Yeah.

Yep.

Yes.

Yeah. [General agreement.]

It was my nan's last wish before she died I would come to boarding. That's why I'm here. I want to make her proud.

Sometimes I look out my window at boarding and think how different it is and nothing like country at home. Then I miss family... but I also see the lights of the city and remember the opportunity here.

Looks like everyone agrees boarding gives opportunities. What are some of the opportunities it's given you?

Well, a good education.

Independence.

Yeah.

Just like living in the city, 'cause we're right in the city. And lots of us girls we're from the country and stuff, so we don't really, like, get that much.

Um... Just comin' to a good school.

Like if someone sees it on my resume, it is better than a state school.

Do you think this has prepared you to do more study after school, go on to uni?

No.

Not really.

Well, just say, like, you really did want to go to university, they would probably, like, prefer someone who went to a private school. As opposed to, like, someone who went to [local high school at home].

How was it at twelve, coming here in year 7?

So hard!

So difficult!

It was so scary.

Yeah, it was so hard.

I walked down the street every day and bought chocolate!

Yeah, same! [Laughter.]

Chocolate, lollies, it was so bad.

No-one stops you, you're eating so much junk food and it kinda gets outta hand. You're like, 'I bought too much!' [Laughter.]

Some weeks I'd get \$50 and Mum would call halfway through the week and be like, 'How did you waste \$50 that quick?' and I wouldn't know.

You have to buy things for your body, by yourself?

Yeah, like deodorant.

And shampoo.

Yep.

How do you get money for that?

From my parents.

Aunty, cousin or someone.

We go down to the shop to buy it.

If you want you can buy some noodles.

You have to buy school stuff too, like pens, year 12 presents.

Always telling us we need to bring money. If the note says, 'You need money,' you don't buy food, you take it for that! [Laughter.]

How do you get home for times like holidays or other business?

Train.

Bus.

Mum picks me up.

No-one has ever missed their trip home from here.

Since coming to boarding I can use public transport.

Yeah, I can use transport. In the city. We know how to get around in the city now.

If you could go back and start again, would you choose to come to boarding again?

No.

I'd probably choose a different school.

If I had a choice I would come here and not board.

Yeah, me too.

I would choose somewhere else.

I would do it all the same. It's better than the school near my house.

The value of boarding was described as 'the extra education you get' and the opportunity to 'learn independence and to do things on your own.' Boarding was described as providing experiences and opportunities that could not be found in the communities the girls had come from, as outlined below.

At the start it was exciting but scary, 'cause basically I'd lived my whole life in another place, with my parents every night.

Seeing new girls everywhere was a bit different. I didn't want to come because I was gonna miss walking around, like, whenever I want. I knew there wasn't many blackfellas who come here... come to a whole school where there wasn't many Koori girls... 'cause I was used to, you know... 'cause I went to school where there was lots of Kooris there. So scary.

At my old school, I never used to attend school as much as I was supposed to.

Many girls commented on the difficulty they had when they first commenced boarding school, in adapting to the new routines and student behaviour expectations. Some noted that it was difficult to adapt to the lack of freedom they had at boarding school, unable to engage in activities such as walking around town, swimming and hanging out with friends at home. Other things they noted as hard to get used to included the large number of female students and lack of male students, the wealth of other students at boarding school, and the small number of Indigenous students attending and boarding at College A.

Is it like home here, would you say boarding is a 'home away from home'?

No.

You don't get the same amount of freedom as when you are home.

Kind of... a lot of things. I don't know how to explain. I do have family here.

Yes. My sister is here.

No.

What makes it not like a home?

The rules.

Yeah, that's it.

Yeah.

Not being able to leave. No freedom.

Yeah, no freedom.

The environment. Like... the bars on the windows make us feel like prisoners.

The small rooms.

Just the fact that, like, when you walk out there's security cameras everywhere.

Yeah, um... I remember last year, [another student] would have been there. I remember Miss K, our old boarding house mistress, um... she came into our study room one night and she was like... 'cause something happened and we asked her and she was like, 'Well, boarding school'... we said boarding was supposed to be a home away from home and she said, 'No, it's not.'

Yeah, she said it's an institution.

Yeah... an institution.

It's an institution. [Agreement all round.]

Yeah, she said the coordinators are not, like, meant to be like your parents, they're not supposed to... um... not be anything like your family... they just...

They... work here?

Yeah! [Agreement.]

Several of the younger students remarked that the sleepover (an evening before the start of the school year for commencing boarders to visit and sleep in the boarding house as a new cohort) helped them to feel more comfortable with transitioning to the boarding house, and assisted them in making friends before they moved to the school.

It was good because I came to the sleepover and I met some girls there, so we were talking over the holidays before we came to school... so kind of had a bit of a connection so it was good.

Other girls mentioned that they had family members who attended boarding schools, including College A, or who had boarded in the past.

When I came I thought it was the best decision of my entire life. Because my sister went to boarding school and she was telling me all about it and she said that it'd be a great opportunity for me and that not many girls or... boys or anybody don't really get to have that opportunity to, like, go, especially because of the scholarship.

When I was in year 7, I actually was excited about going only 'cause I lived in a place where there was no high school whatsoever. There was only 15 kids in the school, 10 Black (which we were all related), and five white farmer's kids. So, my older cousins, they went to boarding school, so did my uncles and aunties, and they'd always tell us about it, like, 'This is where you're going.'

Come to boarding school, I couldn't have been more excited. I lived in a little town... a hole. I couldn't be more excited to get out of there, come to big smoke... to get an education.

A student who had been quiet for most of the yarning circle opened up toward the end of session 3:

The thing is, it's really hard being away from home, and you don't really get to, like, see your family... like... I have little sisters. So, yeah...

It was clear that she was hurting as she spoke. Another participant explained:

Being away from your actual family, especially because we're in the teenage years of our life and difficult experiences... sometimes we feel so alone because we don't have the close net of our mother our support, like, you think... and just growing up and maturing without my mum who was always, usually right there by my side every second, I think that was really hard coming to boarding.

Do you feel like boarding has cut you off at all from home or your home community?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, sometimes.

In a couple of ways.

Yeah, I do. It is hard.

How does that happen?

'Cause you're here all the time... you kind of don't really get to know anything what goes on back at home. And you're not with them all the time.

Yeah.

So... like, with them, it feels completely different.

Yeah.

Yeah, and you lose like that connection you have there, with all different people as well.

Yeah, and they don't tell you as much, 'cause you're not with them.

Sometimes are you left out of things?

Yeah.

Yes! And that makes you feel, like... upset...

'Cause you feel like you're not good enough, say, to know. 'Cause you're not there...

Like you shouldn't know.

Yeah.

It's because you're not around to know what's going on.

Is there sometimes moments where maybe... people might not even realise you don't know?

Yes.

Yes, yes.

Being out of the loop.

Like they talk about stuff and you don't even know.

Does anyone feel differently? Does anyone think they are not cut off from home or community?

[All students agreed they felt cut off from home in some way.]

Does it distance you from your close family?

Sometimes.

Yeah.

Yes.

Yeah, it does.

If you let it. Like it sort of depends on you.

Yeah, that's true.

Like if you keep strong connections and contact with them. 'Cause you got so much work on, you're constantly working.

You've got to keep in touch regularly?

You gotta make the... you know?

Like a two-way street.

And you can keep in touch here at boarding... you have 24-hour access to wi-fi, computers, iPads and phones. Is that right?

Phones until 8:15pm.

9:30pm for us older girls.

Then phones are taken away.

All weekend we get them.

If you got problems you ask them and they probably let you use them.

Say you could only call home once a week, would you still feel connected to home?

If they're busy they might not be able to pick up...

I don't think so.

One phone call then gone? [Shakes head.]

Do you think... boarding school changed your behaviour in any way, how you act?

Manners.

Yeah, manners.

Manners, yeah.

'Cause you miss them so much when you get home you wanna be good.

I haven't changed.

You will by year 10. I did.

My swearing got worse.

Yeah, everyone here has such bad language, all the girls.

I'm less active. I used to run around the streets with no shoes on at home!

I don't think my behaviour has changed.

I never wore a blazer before. The winter uniform was hard.

Yeah, that was hard for me too.

I never wore school shoes before I came here.

Me neither! [Laughter.]

I have the same shoes I had five years ago.

Looking around I can see the tables set for dinner here in the boarding house. Is this similar to home, eating like this?

[Lots of laughter.] We have to set them like this!

At home it's, like, grab your food, eat on the couch!

Yeah! Me too! [Laughter.]

We have to move stuff off the, like, coffee table and sit in front of the TV!

We sit on a bed sheet at home with all my little cousins!

We dress different. My clothes.

First week of boarding school... Like, at home, I don't even know where my shoes are. At home, there's like one thong... stuff like that. So I just go barefoot.

That's shame job! [Laughter.]

I wear my pyjamas round home!

So first week I forget what I was comin' down for, so I was just coming downstairs quickly just didn't have any shoes on and I got in trouble for not wearing shoes.

That was the same as me! I was like, 'ohhh.' [Fake crying.]

You have to wear shoes all the time.

I was really sad. In case you step on a needle, or, like, glass.

Yeah, a sewing needle! [Laughter.]

Is life in boarding timetabled... set out, structured?

Yes! Yes.

Definitely.

Yes!

You get used to it. When you first start, you just want time to yourself really. But now, like, since year 10 from year 7, I'm just so used to doing it.

Yeah, you get really sick of it... and I'm sick of it.

Like at home, when you don't get dinner at 6 I'm like...

Yeah, I know!

I'm, like, by 8 at home I'm starving and Mum's like, 'What's wrong with you?' and I'm like, 'I eat dinner at 6 o'clock!' [Laughter.]

You're used to having times set out. Do you think that will help you in the future, scheduling time to study and eat regularly once you are finished and working or at uni?

Yes.

Yeah.

That will help.

I won't have it so structured. One day I will just kick back. Then I'll have dinner.

Yeah... um, maybe I'll have dinner at the same time.

It sounds pretty different to home. Now, or maybe later in university, if you had to go to a restaurant or a special dinner would you know what to do?

Yeah.

Yeah, I would.

Sometimes at home Mum asks us to [set the cutlery on the table]. She likes to be fancy sometimes, 'cause she's just in a mood! [Laughter.] She's like, 'I just wanna sit at the table tonight.'

Before I came here, I didn't even know how to use a knife and fork properly.

Boarding school was noted as distancing students from their families and communities, not just through lack of contact but also through the changes in students' behaviour and self-concept. This loss of connection, however, was balanced by the new connections students made with Indigenous friends at boarding school. 'Having to stay with your friends... it's like a big sleepover, seeing them 24/7...' one participant remarked.

As noted, several girls mentioned they had family members who had attended boarding schools, including College A, when they started boarding. One student remarked that, 'friends is the best part [about boarding school]. They become a little family to you, living with your friend. It's like a family away from home,' and another added, 'it's kind of like having another family, like a second family, you get to live with your friends and meet new people from different areas.'

By the end of session 3, the College A students had decided on the topic they wanted to speak about in their research, which was 'what it's like to be a Koori girl at boarding school'. I asked students to take 12-15 images that represented their boarding experiences over the next few weeks, and to upload these to the Facebook group. The students were due to go on school holidays before I returned, so they would have the chance to take images both at the boarding school and when they were at home over the holidays before our next session.

Weaving together

When I returned to College A after the school holidays, there were 62 images uploaded within our Facebook group. Session 4 opened with a sharing of afternoon tea that had been provided by College A, before we looked at the images in the Facebook group together on a laptop. Each student was asked to share her pictures with the group and to talk about the meaning of the images and what they were saying about boarding school. Some of these images are found later in this chapter. After viewing the collection of images as a group, it became clear that each of the 20 students in the research community at College A had uploaded at least one image of a family member. These included mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, nieces, nephews, aunties and uncles. Some students had photographed old photographs, family pictures that they had photographed from family portraits or photo albums, because they felt they explained the message they wanted to convey. Many students' photos featured

their house, or special places near their home. Another topic of the yarn was the passing away of loved ones, and the lives of those left behind.

Five students had included images that explained a family member passing away. I noted as I listened to all yarns and watched the students discussing their images that something seemed to be missing for me: a sense of the long history of the well-established boarding school, which was over a century old and boasted one of Australia's oldest boarding programs for Indigenous girls. At other boarding schools I had visited as a teacher, students were well aware of the long history of the school, and this history was often part of the boarding school student experience. I am not sure if students at College A simply had not been taught the history of the school in a way they identified with, if they did not see themselves as a part of this history or if they simply had not reflected the history of the school in the images they took, this time around.

I asked the students if they had been happy with their images of boarding school. Several students mentioned that they had wanted to get pictures of the classrooms, but could not. We yarned about why they wanted to take images of the classrooms, and students explained that boarding school is also about day school classes. Students talked about not feeling included in classes, and feeling shame when their teacher pointed them out when mentioning Aboriginal content.

Do you learn about Indigenous things in classes at school?

Maybe in geography.

And history. Religion.

We did it in English once.

In drama you should be doing an Aboriginal play 'cause I saw that.

It's only, like, once a year.

Yeah, like, once a year. Hardly ever.

It's like they only have it there just so we're happy but they don't have enough of it.

It's like they're not really interested in it.

I went on camp and they had this whole thing about Indigenous, a big talk, for school camp.

There's no constant.

It's... tacked on.

That's why Indigenous studies would be good to have.

I would choose to do it.

Me too.

Yeah, me too.

Once a month we might hear. Sometimes in geography it's once a month.

But definitely not once a week. I haven't learned about nothing [Indigenous].

We heard about it every day in my primary school but here, never.

Does that make a difference, not hearing about Aboriginal stuff regularly in class?

Yes.

Well... I dunno. It would make things make more sense to me.

That would make me more interested 'cause that's my strong part... what I'm passionate about.

How often do you do Indigenous things out of class, in the boarding house?

Nothing, not never.

Never.

Nope, we never do. The school is racist.

What is it that makes you think the school is racist?

Well, for a start they won't fly our flag!

We've asked and asked but they said there's no point.

They flew it once, though. Sorry Day.

So, they won't fly the flag. What other sort of things make you feel like it's racist?

One time my history teacher was talking about my town in class. I don't think she knew I was from there. I'm pale-skinned. She read in the paper that

bad stuff was happening at home and told my class, 'Those bad Aboriginal kids,' and I didn't say anything. How would she even know? She's lived in this city her whole life. It's the white kids in town causing trouble too. It's just that kind of thinking.

But you have your Aboriginal support officer. What's that like, having an Indigenous person working with you?

It reminds you of... back home.

Yeah, 'cause the girls here, they aren't like the people we grew up with. For me, definitely. I grew up with lots of Aboriginal people round. And these girls are nothin' like them. 'Cause they are posh and stuff.

If you didn't have your support officer, what would boarding be like?

Well, 'cause [Mirri] just reminds me of [home community] 'cause, um, but she reminds me of my, I dunno, she's sort of like... Aunty.

Yeah.

Yes.

We were here without someone for ages.

Yeah, ages, yeah.

Without anyone.

What was that like?

You had, like, no-one.

No support.

Yeah.

No support if you were attacked.

And when we went and spoke to her about, like, racism... [the boarding mistress] she... she didn't understand.

Yeah, didn't get it.

Yeah.

'Cause she hadn't been through it herself she didn't know what we were talking about.

So now you have an Indigenous 'supporter' who can be a voice for you to the other staff?

Yeah.

Yeah, that's it. [General agreement all round.]

That's right.

They wouldn't have done anything. 'Cause we had a lot of racial... and incidents and we told them, but they weren't listening.

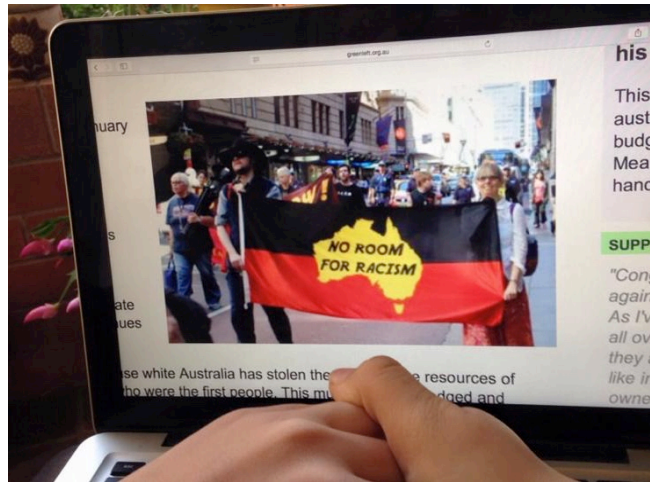
Yeah, they didn't even try to or anything.

Data analysis

Prior to my fifth visit to College A, the students had been offered the opportunity to have an individual yarn with me, after a few of the younger students in the group told the Indigenous support officer that they felt they hadn't had enough time in the group yarns to discuss all the meanings of their photographs. As such, Mirri had scheduled some 45-minute blocks over a number of days and invited me to the school to have some yarns with students alone. I had the opportunity to meet with some students individually, as well as in small groups, to talk about each of their images.

I understood that the photographs and the photographers themselves were inextricably intertwined. In the smaller group and individual yarns, I kept in mind the relatedness between the students, their homes and communities, College A and myself. These yarns were transcribed in the same way the yarning circles were and the students in the individual yarns agreed for their conversations to be included in these analysis processes. An example of one of these yarns is included below as an example for the reader. Student K was in year 11. She started her yarn based on an image she had taken.

I did this one to show people thinking that we're different, like... you can feel it. If you're Aboriginal, you feel the difference, of being a Black kid to a white kid. From the teachers to the students, you can just tell that everyone looks at you differently. And it is a hard thing, like... but some Koori girls might not experience it, but definitely me and a couple of girls, we do.



Student K noted that both students and staff commenting that Aboriginal people and students always ‘received free things and scholarships’ was one of things that made her boarding experience ‘isolating’. In explaining racism, Student K gave an example of a class she had in year 8, watching a video.

There was a documentary on Aboriginal people. And then they was wearing clothes. And someone said, ‘Oh, they’re wearing clothes, what the heck?’ I found that offensive. I thought it was rude and they shouldn’t have said that. It’s just like little things... people make jokes and stuff. But I don’t find it funny.

As Student K gave voice to her experiences of racism, she had some difficulty in pinpointing or describing exact examples of how she had experienced racism. She explained that she felt isolated when the behaviours of others accumulated: the way people looked at her, spoke to her and excluded her. Student K went on to describe a different form of discrimination she had experienced.

A couple of us Koori girls are fair-skinned, like me... others here, just thinking that we’re not... you know, we might just be claiming it or something, they don’t understand there’s a lot of fair-skinned Aboriginals who are strong in culture, for instance me, I got a strong culture, but I’m just fair. You know? But they just don’t get that. They expect us all to be dark, but we’re not. Most of us are fair-skin. This school, they just don’t understand how we feel.



My mate is fair-skinned and people can't tell she's Koori. But then some girls found out she was and immediately started treating her different.

I asked if she thought they were somehow judging her for simply being Aboriginal. 'Exactly,' she replied. Another issue Student K raised was the way the college dealt with concerns raised by Aboriginal students and their families.

The school is like, 'what are you complaining about? You guys should be happy you are getting a scholarship and stuff for free.'

I asked if this was the students, or staff, making remarks about the scholarships.

It's students and staff. There have been so many things, especially in year 7, 8 and 9 before [Mirri] came... we complained about it but nothing is done. They'd say that they would follow it up but they never do. People go through depression because of that stuff. But I would just call up my mum and tell her and Mum would ring up the school, come in, complain. Nothing would be done about it.

The perceived lack of action by the college toward racist incidents contributed, in Student K's understanding, to her sister's withdrawal from the college before she had completed year 12.

My big sister, she came here and she left because of it. I'm staying here to prove them wrong, and show them that everything they do isn't going to hurt me. I want to make my people proud and my family proud.

I asked Student K if any other students had left. She recalled a lot of students leaving because of similar issues.

Being an Indigenous girl at this school, you feel like you stand out. I don't know, you can't really express your culture or nothing. I get up and talk about it, 'cause teachers ask me to, but girls don't want to listen. This is my culture, why don't they pay respect?



Student K noted particular difficulty in the struggle to remain at boarding school until graduation, and the recurring struggle to return after going home for holidays. ‘When I go home, I don’t want to come back. I hate boarding school. But now I’m close to finishing so I just do it,’ she said. Being a year 11 student was the primary reason boarding school experiences had ‘become easier’ for Student K. The main reasons for her attendance at boarding school was that her family, especially her mother, had not received a good education, and she wanted to make her family proud.

I want to be an example and a role model to the other younger Koori kids, and be an example to all my friends that might not go to school and that, tell them that it’s good. When I’m older I want to do something for my people. I want to prove to white people that Black people can do it, that we aren’t all drunks that dropped out of school. I want to prove them wrong. And be an example of that, a role model. That’s one of the main reasons I came here.

The lack of knowledge surrounding boarding school before she arrived, and the lack of information given by the school and scholarship fund on what to expect as an Aboriginal girl attending College A were things that Student K noted as problematic.

I know this scholarship is a good opportunity, but we didn’t know what we were in for. Like... we didn’t know we was gonna be looked at differently ‘cause we’re Black. Mum said this recently to me: ‘If I knew that we’re gonna face racism, I wouldn’t have sent you to that school.’ She didn’t know anything. She thought this school was gonna accept us for who we are, you know, they made out like they were gonna support us if we had any racial issues but they haven’t.

For Student K, the day school and the boarding house seemed connected but separate.

All Koori students are boarders because it comes with our scholarship. So we are like one big family. If anything happened in the boarding house, we

would stick together and make a solution to it. Especially because we have [Mirri] there. Whereas the day school is completely different. All my friends are Koori, and one is African. I'm mates with them [non-Indigenous students] but I can't really be myself. Like, I can't talk and put out all this stuff. Last year I had no Aboriginal girls in my class and I felt real uncomfortable especially when they would talk about Aboriginal history. But now I'm in class with all the Koori girls and it's so much better.



When I asked Student K if the large number of Koori girls enrolled (30 Indigenous boarders for most years during her enrolment at College A) had made a difference to her, she replied that, if there had only been a small number of Aboriginal girls, she would not have continued on at the college

I just wouldn't. My sister was the only Aboriginal girl in her first year but she knew I was coming the next year. So she stayed. But because there was hardly any Koori girls in her year is exactly one of the reasons she wanted to leave.

White girls, I think they need to learn that we're not just here for free. They need to learn about our culture. They just aren't well-educated in our culture. Honestly, they need to pay respect because this is our traditional land. Our people have gone through that much. No-one pays respect when we learn about Stolen Generations and stuff in class. Honestly they have no idea the suffering our people have gone through.

In Chapter 1 I discussed how historic events, in line with Aboriginal ways of viewing time, can be lived in the present with great emotion. The Stolen Generations is seen as an example of an event that occurred 'in the past' but which remains very much alive for a number of Aboriginal students in this study. Janca and Bullen (2003) explain that such events can be experienced:

...concurrently with the present moment, even though they may have actually or chronologically occurred further away in time... In Aboriginal culture,

there are a number of events that are seen as 'lasting' or 'everlasting' regardless of their linear time duration. Moreover, the events with major impact on an Aboriginal people and culture are sometimes perceived as 'timeless' or eternal (e.g. consequences of colonisation, loss of culture and identity, separation of families and children, land rights) (Janca & Bullen 2003, p. 3).

This concept is also discussed in Chapter 5 referring to similar experiences at College B.

I asked Student K whether College A marked national days of significance in relation to reconciliation, such as Sorry Day, or if these were covered in day classes through Indigenous content in the curriculum.

We had this assembly about reconciliation. They asked those who thought we [Black and white] should come together as one. Hardly one student stood up. I was sitting in the back and I turned around and just went off my head. They are the most racist people. They are so disrespectful. Last year, we all used to sit together, us Koori girls in year 8, 9 and 10 in a big group. We were all sitting under the undercroft for lunch and a year 12 girl goes, 'Ugh. There's so many Black girls here. So many Abo's.'

Sorry business was an issue brought up by two images Student K had brought in, with her family members sitting on a grave, holding balloons and presents. I let Student K lead the yarn.

...Because how Aboriginal people cope with death is different, when my big cousin passed away I took... I think it was three weeks off first. They were ringing up my mum every single day – they wouldn't let us mourn for him, and then I come back and I was real emotional, I didn't want to go to school or nothing but they forced me, then my Mum was like, 'Nup, they're not going to school, they're not mentally right' but then they just got funny with us. We did come back, my sister and I, about one month later, and they just act all funny with us. Act like we done something wrong, and then they don't support us. Then they wouldn't let us go to the funeral. We had to get all the money and that, that took a month. And then they wasn't gonna let us go because it might affect our education. Mum was like, 'no, that's her big brother, who do you think you are?'

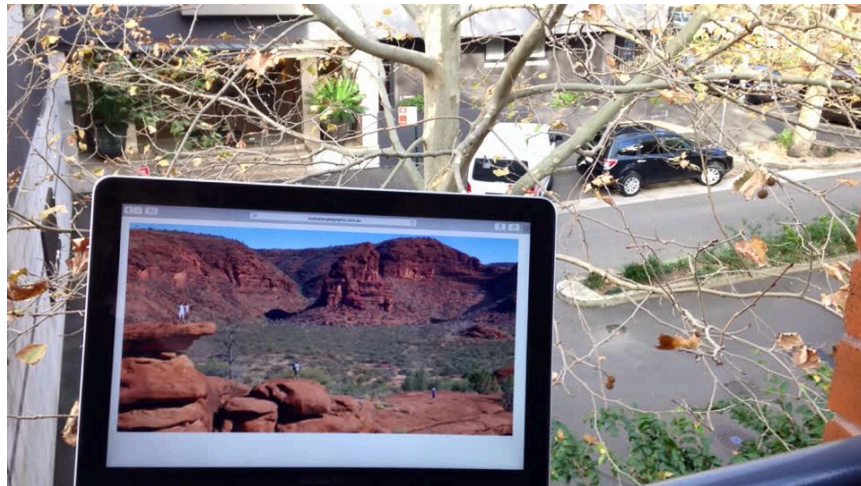


Sorry business and cultural business often present difficulties in school attendance for Indigenous students, a problem deeply connected to Indigenous and Western differences in viewing time. Janca and Bullen (2003) explain:

for an Aboriginal person the family or community will always be prioritised before the self. In Aboriginal settings, the individual as an entity is considered to be less important than family and group... there may be other priorities such as a funeral, ceremonial business or other important events... [they are] committed to attending as a group member. It is important to remember that such a prioritisation of events is very important and culturally meaningful for strengthening Aboriginal community membership (p. 4).

The effect of not having sufficient time and space for sorry business not only affected Student K's mental and emotional wellbeing but also impacted on her opinion of school and of the people who she had previously thought assisted and supported her learning.

When I came back, I hated the old head mistress. I didn't even want to talk to her because she's so rude. After we came back from the funeral, on the spot Mum asked if we wanted her to pull us out now. She said she'd take us to another school. But I decided to stick it out.



I asked if her family had thought about any other boarding schools as an option. Student K's mother had originally wanted her to go to boarding school in Alice Springs, because that was where her cousins were, and Student K had considered it.

...I don't know. I think because they're all Black girls up there, you know, I'm gonna stay here and educate these white girls. Do something for my people. Being in Alice Springs, they're all Koori girls, they're all my cousins, so... we all know about each other's culture, we're all strong about it. Whereas no-one here, they don't really know.

After all Student K and all other students had been given opportunities to have small group or individual yarns, a yarning circle was held to allow our group to discuss all the images, and to theme these according to their main messages. The yarn began with students suggesting overall themes they saw across the collection of all student photographs. These themes and subthemes were written as headings on cards, and are listed in Table 2: Themes and subthemes.

| <i>The School</i> | <i>The Boarding House</i> | <i>Home</i> |
|--|--|--|
| Discrimination based on being on an Indigenous scholarship | Different environment to home | Family bond/love |
| Lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture | Close to the city | Connection to country/home |
| Making family proud | Social media connecting students to home | Being myself |
| Racism | Loneliness | Freedom |
| Changing to fit in/two ways of being | Division between Koori students and other students | Lack of opportunity |
| Lack of respect and marking of cultural acknowledgement | Homesickness/ missing home | Nothing to do |
| Greater opportunities/brighter future | Friends become family | Feeling different at home since becoming a boarder |

Table 2: Themes and subthemes

Images were moved underneath the subthemes written on cards, until group consensus was reached as to where they best fit. In the process, subthemes of *pets* and *sport* were removed, decided upon by the group as irrelevant after no images were placed underneath them. I asked why and one student explained, boarding school had little to do with sport, and pets didn't represent the experience of boarding school at all. *Lack of opportunity* and *nothing to do* were combined with the subtheme *lack of opportunity*. *Different environment to home* was also combined with *close to the city*. Narrowing of the themes continued and some subthemes were renamed. Two major themes emerged, which encompassed all of the subthemes: *connection* and *contrast*.

The same process was used to theme printed quotes from transcriptions of the student yarns. Students placed their quotes under the subthemes from their photo themes, and within the two major themes. Examples of their textual data theming are included below:

| <i>Contrast Subthemes</i> | <i>Textual Data</i> |
|--|--|
| Discrimination/racism | <i>Being an Indigenous girl at this school, you feel like you stand out. You can't really express your culture or nothing. I get up and talk about it, 'cause teachers ask me but girls don't want to listen.</i> |
| Lack of understanding of Aboriginal people | <i>Last year, we all used to sit together, us Koori girls in year 8, 9 and 10 in a big group. We were all sitting under the undercroft for lunch and a year 12 girl goes, 'There's so many Black girls here, so many Abo's.' We were like, 'are you serious?' We complained to our old boarding mistress, but she did nothing.</i> |
| Aboriginal flag | <i>The first time ever the Aboriginal flag was put up for Sorry Day the other week. I nearly cried. That meant so much to me, and us Koori girls. Made me feel finally like, welcome you know. Like they wanted us to be part of the school. The other day I saw they had taken it down. And then it's never gone back up since. They don't know how much that hurt us when that flag went down.</i> |
| Culture | <i>We never hear about Aboriginal things in class. I can only remember once in the four years I've been here. They showed a video and it was about Aboriginal people in the city. One of the white girls goes, 'how come they're wearing clothes?'</i> |
| Friends become family | <i>The Indigenous girls at this school I can't thank enough... 'cause were like family, it's really good.</i> |

Table 3: Textual data representing *contrast* theme and subthemes

| <i>Connection Subthemes</i> | <i>Textual Data</i> |
|--|--|
| Isolation and loneliness at boarding school | <p><i>The hardest thing about boarding is not being able to see your family every day you know, family and the things you love most.</i></p> <p><i>It's hard here, but we can't really go... we want to stay here 'cause we want to get somewhere in life. Being away from your actual family, especially because we're in the teenage years of our life and difficult experiences... sometimes we feel so alone.</i></p> <p><i>I always lay in my bed in my dorm, I've always got my family photos right next to me 'cause I always miss my family. They are pinned next to my bed. This photo shows how lonely I am at boarding school but that my home and family will always be there for me and are always with me.</i></p> |
| Home is where I can be myself, where I am safe and with those I love | <p><i>This photo is a photo of my home (where I live) a place where I feel safe and myself.</i></p> |
| Home has no opportunities for the future | <p><i>The opportunities here, where I come from I wouldn't get the opportunities I get here. I live in a small town... I couldn't be more excited to get out of there, come to the big smoke... to get an education.</i></p> |
| Bright light at the end/within darkness | <p><i>I want to make my family proud. I want to get a good education to do something for our mob. It's hard when other Koori girls leave, heaps have left and it's like a big hole when they go. I also stay for the little Koori girls here.</i></p> <p><i>I know boarding school is a good opportunity, but we didn't know what we were in for. Like... we didn't know we was gonna be looked at differently 'cause we're Black.</i></p> |

Table 4: Textual data representing *connection* theme and subthemes

Appendix 1 shows examples of the results of visual data theming. With the students' data theming complete, I looked over the data. Within the two themes (*contrast* and *connection*), I could see two motifs appearing frequently: the Aboriginal flag, and bright light in darkness. I saw there was a connection between loneliness and isolation, and the love of family at home. Loneliness and the feelings of isolation were frequently seen within the data in connection with missing the love, family and connection found at home. I discussed these findings with the students, who did not suggest any changes. The Aboriginal flag appeared to be a symbol not only of the ongoing struggle by Koori students to have the flag raised at College A but also of the broader racism and discrimination described by Indigenous students at College A. This was characterized by the lack of freedom to be themselves, the cultural ignorance shown by teachers and students, and the disconnection between the ways of home and the ways of school.

Data analysis by the students demonstrated that, while boarding school is often experienced as a lonely and difficult place, students generally saw it as a pathway toward a better future, a way to make change for their family and mob, and to make their people proud. The textual data in particular revealed the racism and discrimination experienced by students at College A, and also uncovered the sisterhood and strength they had as a collective of Aboriginal women. Students at College A perceived boarding school, while difficult, as a worthwhile struggle toward a better future for themselves and their families.

A key finding was that boarding school changed students in how they saw their culture, their home and their future, and in the way they behaved and dressed. Students in this study considered it highly unlikely that they would return to their home communities after school, for reasons of lack of opportunity, and poorer outcomes such as lack of employment, lack of options for further study, lower socio-economic status and their children one day having fewer opportunities. Students noted that boarding school had led to changes in how they viewed their homes and how they acted as individuals, as well as how others viewed them at home.

Student images from College A that showed *contrast* were taken in settings at boarding school, in the boarding house, and outside the school, at home. Some showed contrast between the light outside, and the dark inside their dorm rooms. Others showed the contrast of the sun rising or setting in a darkened sky. Others

showed contrast through the brightness of an exit sign in a dark room, or the light at the end of the boarding school corridor. Contrast was also shown through images of Aboriginal students, painted up in ochre, in front of Catholic boarding school icons, representing differences in culture and community. The contrasts reflected the students' experiences of being in two different worlds: home and school, and, Aboriginal culture and Western education. The contrast represents two worlds, and the divide between two worlds was explained in their yarns: a divide between the social, cultural, environmental, educational and familial experiences of home and school. The use of contrast, particularly through lighting in the student images, highlighted the student expectations and beliefs that boarding school was providing them and their families with a brighter future.

Student images from College A demonstrated *connection* through images of people connected physically, such as hugs, smiles and holding hands; through images of family events and cultural events, where students were connected through engagement in shared activities; and through symbolic connection, such as images that showed dorm rooms filled with family photos, connecting them to home. Students at College A explained that these images represented family connection, safety, love and belonging. The connection shown between the students in the boarding house and doing activities together showed the importance of the bonds they formed in staying strong while they were away from home. The images of the Aboriginal flag represented the connection to culture, to family and to community felt by the girls, as well as their bond in standing proud and strong as Aboriginal students even when they felt disrespected and isolated while at boarding school. The images of dorms that had pictures of families showed the connection that students continued to maintain with their families while they were away from home, and the love and connection they held to their homes even as they considered the lack of opportunities available there.

Student images of country demonstrated the deep connection to country many of the Koori girls have, and the unbroken bond they share with the land of their people and ancestors. Discrimination, racism and a lack of cultural respect and understanding emerged in most student yarns. Homesickness, loneliness and missing family were also noted by many students, as were concepts of sisterhood and friendship among the Koori students. Students spoke often about the lack of teacher and student knowledge, respect and understanding of Aboriginal cultures in the classroom and boarding house.

Students spoke about the problems of having an Aboriginal scholarship and the taunts and discriminatory comments they received regularly from teachers and staff alike. A subtheme that was prevalent in the textual data but not a major theme in the visual data was the concept that boarding school changed Koori students. Concepts of walking in two worlds were present in the textual data, with many students noting their experiences of ‘not fitting in’ when they return to their communities but also not fitting in at the boarding school among non-Indigenous students. The 20 students at College A all agreed that boarding school had changed them. They had learned new skills; independence; how to manage money and buy their necessities; how to travel independently; and how to live away from their home, family and community. Students also agreed that they felt they were missing out on things back at home, and felt different when they returned to their communities. For many, home was seen as a place they would return to for holidays and visits, but not somewhere they would live or work after graduating from boarding school.

Finishing the dilly-bag

Students identified images that best represented the major themes they decided upon in their data analysis for an exhibition, which they planned as a way to share their findings with family, other school students and college staff. College A agreed to provide catering for the event. I was not present for the planning of the event, as students did this themselves in school time. When I arrived at the school to set up with the students on the evening of the exhibition, they had decorated their dining hall with flowers and candles for their special evening. The students had invited family members, teachers and the principal. I brought the images the students had selected, which I had printed on foam core ready to mount on the walls easily with Blu-Tack. My only role in the exhibition was to print their images and to place images into a slideshow along with their selected quotes, for projection on the evening.

The girls set up a projector to show the slideshow on a wall as their audience arrived and slowly moved around the room viewing the photographs. An Indigenous student who had just started at the school and had not been able to participate in the study had asked to act as master of ceremonies. Two students had prepared speeches about their experiences in the project and their images. Student C spoke first. She spoke of how difficult boarding school had been at times, and how the racism she faced at school was hard but had made her stronger and more determined to succeed.

This is a picture I took of my badge. We are allowed to wear them at school. When I wear this badge, I feel proud inside. We feel good about being Aboriginal even though sometimes they make us feel bad about our scholarships and say we are here for free. We aren't here for them. We are here to do our people proud. Being a part of this project brought us together. Hearing from other Koori girls here that they feel the same way, hearing that they have had some of the same experiences as me, made us come closer together.

A number of students spoke clearly and openly about the negative impact racist remarks from students had on their boarding school experiences. As I walked around the room during the viewing time I heard students speaking with audience members about the significance of their images, yarning about homesickness, community connections, how it feels to be an Aboriginal student at boarding school, the difference between home and boarding school, and other topics. At the end of the student speeches, two of the junior participants presented me with a bunch of flowers on behalf of the school and the project. Mirri gave a speech that moved me deeply. She said:

Thank you for all you have done working with our girls who are now known as 'little researchers.' Not only can they say they have been part of a PhD project, you have inspired them, and me, to speak up and open up about our experiences. I have seen the girls come closer together because of this experience, and we hope that our girls' voices will be shared and make boarding better for Indigenous girls here and internationally.

Many of the students and their family members described the evening as exciting and empowering, and many shed tears during the evening. As Wilson and Corbett (2001) explain, if policymakers and school leaders listened more keenly to student voices, 'they would find out that they have invaluable partners in the educational enterprise – if only students had the chance' (Wilson & Corbett 2001, p. 128).



CHAPTER 5

College B

College B is an independent Anglican girls' boarding school located in an Australian capital city. Established in the 1920s by a religious order, it is the oldest private school in the city within which it sits, and the only boarding school for girls in its city with an Indigenous scholarship program. Boarding is available for girls in years 7 to 12, with 95 girls boarding at College B in 2015. For many years, College B has maintained a high percentage of girls completing their year 12 certificate, with most graduates going on to pursue university studies. College B has a dual scholarship program available for Indigenous boarders. The first scholarship foundation interviews and selects Aboriginal students, then places each student in a boarding school according to suitability, interest and availability of places. This fund covers the cost of boarding and school fees at College B. Once students are enrolled at College B, they are supported by a second, smaller foundation, which provides student mentoring by staff from a local large business and financial support for extracurricular activities (such as overseas travel for language immersion, or international sporting championships) that Aboriginal students may be involved in.

Gathering grasses

I contacted College B among 20 other girls' boarding schools in Australia when I first started looking for sites in which to conduct this research. Two weeks went by, and, not having heard anything from College B, I wrote an email to the deputy principal. After four weeks, I had received one response from the 20 schools I

had contacted, an email from College A. Two days before my first meeting at College A, I received a phone call from the deputy principal of College B, inviting me to come to the school for a meeting. The deputy apologised for the delay; he had been checking with the two scholarship funds the Aboriginal boarders at College B were funded by, to see if they agreed to the participation of the students in this study. Once he had their approval, he had contacted me.

I travelled to College B to meet with the deputy principal and share some of my own story with him, including my educational journey leading to my PhD studies. The deputy was pleased that I was an Aboriginal researcher, and noted that my personal history was one of the reasons College B had agreed to participate in this research. He explained that College B is in close proximity to a major Australian research university, and it receives hundreds of research requests every year, almost all of which are rejected. When he read my story after searching me on Google, he took my request to the principal, because he believed being involved in a project such as this one would empower the Indigenous students at College B, as much as it would assist my PhD. As we yarned about photoyarn and the research plan for College B, I reminded the principal of an offer I had made in my initial email. I had said I would be happy to work at the school after my research, to assist with Indigenous education, to mentor students or through volunteer work. I could make this offer as I lived close to the city of College B, while for College A I did not.

College B, as with College A, asked for all Aboriginal boarders to be invited to be a part of this study. The school had a small cohort of six Aboriginal boarders, in grades 8 to 12. One student decided not to participate before we started research. She expressed that she wished she could be a part of the project but her commitments were too great at that time and she was about to leave for several weeks on a sporting trip with a school team to compete overseas.

The deputy principal met with the students and I on my first visit to introduce me, giving the girls a short overview of my own educational journey as well as a some broad information about the focus of my research so far. The girls were engaged, happy and friendly. Outside the room we were meeting in, I could see that four flags were flying in front of the school: the Australian flag, the College flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag. In our first session, I had the opportunity to

yarn with the girls and find out a little of who they were and where they had come from to board at the school.

At the end of the first session, all five students expressed that they would love to be a part of the project, and the deputy principal informed us that he would contact parents for approval. I would return when he had received responses from parents and guardians, at which point we could commence the research process.

Preparing the fibres

The deputy principal called me a week after I met the students and reported that all parents, had given permission for their daughters to participate in this research. In our next session, I yarned with the students to form relationships and to work out our connections. Because the school was in a city I have lived in, we identified several community members we all knew. Two of the students were from Queensland, so we had much to talk about however we did not have any family connections.

I had printed out a basic outline of the photoyarn process to talk through with the girls and in our first session since we initially met, they were keen to understand what research might look like, and how we would go about it. We yarned about the stages of the research and how taking their own photos would give them a chance to share their ideas about boarding school with an audience of their choosing. After a yarn about which audience the students wanted to talk up to about their experiences of boarding school, the group decided that their teachers and boarding house parents were the audience they wanted to speak up to.

At College B, the students did not mention the other boarders or non-Indigenous students as an audience they wanted to speak up to, in contrast to College A. Hearing that they would be holding and organising their own exhibition at the end of the research was a source of excitement for the students. At the end of research session 1, we read through the required information and each student signed a form to give their consent to be a part of the research. As with College A, ethical considerations included topics that I would need to report if they were disclosed. We also discussed the support that would be available if students felt upset by topics covered during our research, and how our group yarns would mean sharing information in front of one another, which students said they were comfortable doing.

Learning to weave

The small size of the research community at College B led to our yarns flowing in a different way to those at College A. The students were closer to each other, and all of them were receiving boarding scholarships from an Indigenous scholarship fund, which they all spoke very highly of. One of the first things several students mentioned about boarding school was a special trip to Uluru, an excursion that the scholarship fund takes all boarding students on when they are selected to receive a full boarding scholarship. This experience was described as helpful toward forming bonds with other Indigenous boarders, who were starting boarding school at schools across Australia.

By our next session, the students had been thinking about the photoyarn process and were keen to take some images. We had a yarn around the ethics of photography in a school environment, and the school policy that no photographs were to be taken of other students. I asked if they had access to camera phones and internet. College B provided free wi-fi access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and students were all allowed to use one-to-one handheld devices (smart phones, tablets and laptops) at any time during the school day. College B was running on an almost paperless system; textbooks were provided digitally on students' laptops, and school communication occurred via email. Facebook, however, was only used by only three of the five students in our research group, so we decided the best way to keep in touch, share images and discuss the project with one another, would be via group email. In this session, our yarns covered the scholarship fund, among other topics.

Did you know someone who went to boarding school before you came here?

A lot of people from our town did actually.

For me, it wasn't really spoken about. When I went to primary school I didn't hear of anyone else going to boarding other than [Student B] and I.

I didn't know anyone either. Mum was lookin' for a scholarship and stuff and a school up in Sydney recommended this one.

I went to a Catholic school and Mum was looking for a scholarship for my brothers and stuff and she found this one.

My brother, and cousin brother went to boarding school. I'm not sure of the names but in Sydney.

Was this the only scholarship you applied for?

Yes.

Yep, this was my only one.

This was the only one I applied for.

Why did you like this one, the school or the scholarship?

Mum told me to.

My cousins were on this one.

Um, I applied for this school and I had a choice between this one and a different school my cousins are at. They do not fit at all. The girls are constantly fighting. So I thought I'd rather come here.

They said that same school for me, or this one. But they had too many apply for that one, so I came here. I loved their boarding house, they have individual rooms. And they are high-tech houses. Amazing. It's boys and girls.

The only reason I filled it out was because I was a big fan of the move to Brisbane. But they came and said to me, that the scholarship fund had talked and this city would be better for me. So that's how I ended up here.

My mum told me to apply for boarding school. Since probably about year 3, I've just kinda wanted to get out. And then I heard someone talking about boarding school, and I asked Mum and she looked into a bit more and she found [scholarship fund]. She wouldn't let me go at first, but then she did.

How long does it take you to get home from here?

It takes about a whole day. I take two planes, sometimes it depends.

I just catch a bus, then a train, then a bus. It takes about six hours.

Yeah, about six or seven hours in total.

Does it make a difference living far away?

I think being further away makes it less tempting to go back home. If I was closer or could visit family often, it would make the homesickness worse. [General agreement.]

How do you keep in touch with family?

We have our phones on us all day every day at school. In classes. It depends, if you are doing it right – our school is a technology based school, so you can bring iPhones and iPads to classes. As long as you aren't texting your

friends. You can communicate with family all day. Except if you spend too much money and your parents say you can't.

It's so good because...wi-fi is all around the boarding house. I just use messenger [to get] my Mum to ring me. I use FaceTime and Skype.

Sometimes it's good being in touch with family all the time but sometimes it's bad. Like when I've had a particularly stressful day and I'm like swearing and yelling on the phone to my Mum. When I'm in a bad mood, especially when they make the same notification over the loudspeaker all through the house.

My parents can't work technology.

College B students yarned about how photography was a way to share their experiences with family while they are away at boarding schools. One student in particular had a strong love of photography. She discussed angles, lighting and symbolism with the younger students, giving them some ways to take pictures onsite of things they might not be able to find. Although she was the youngest student in the research community at College B, this student led much of the yarn in this session.

Weaving together

I returned to College B two days later for our third session. Sitting in a yarning circle on the floor, we met in the same room as we had for the previous session, a homely living area in the boarding house, decorated with lounges, pillows and rugs. A fireplace was burning in the corner of the room, and to me it felt like I was in someone's lounge room or home. Students, however, were clear about their feelings concerning the boarding house being a place to stay for school, not a 'home away from home'.

Does it feel like home when you are here?

This is a house, not a home. It's a house. I saved it as 'asylum' in my phone contact list! [Laughter.]

Why is there bars on the windows? It feels like jail.

I have heard stories of rooms being broken into.

Apparently someone saw someone outside her window!

Isn't that because we have to be careful because sometimes people lurk around the school?

Especially because, all girls' boarding school. [Laughter.]

So, what do you love about living here at boarding school?

The free wi-fi is the best part about boarding school.

Yeah!

The best part is the people you meet, like this. And the opportunities you have as well.

Learning how to cook by yourself, so we don't have to eat the boarding house food! [Laughter.] We can cook in the kitchen.

Yeah, we tried to make biscuits!

Here at boarding, do you have to buy your own things?

We have to buy our own toiletries. The shop is 30 minutes that way. We walk, after school, on weekends. We are allowed out to certain places for a certain amount of time.

I once bought a watermelon. And it was too heavy so I called them up and said I was sick so they had to come pick me up. It had a face on it! [Laughter.]

You can work. I've had a job. It was at the after school care, so I just walked down. But in winter the tutors pick us up. So we get money that way.

Otherwise you get weekend money from the boarding house – \$20 a weekend which parents have to pay back.

Yeah, it's not free money. Our parents pay it.

Other schools only get five dollars. That sucks!

You can't buy anything for five dollars!

What is the worst part of boarding school?

Well, when sorry business happens at home. For me it's really hard. I don't know, I'm not going to tell the story, but last year... this one time, my sister rang up. And... she was crying... and yeah... I couldn't do anything. Yeah.

At home... like, here I get freedom. At home I get freedom, but they are different freedoms. We are on a longer leash than a lot of boarding schools. Except boys' schools. They can leave all the time.

The thing that bothers me most, like, I don't go out much just for runs and stuff, but when I do come back, the thing that bothers me the most is that

they always ask us about it like, 'Where'd you go?' 'Who'd you meet?'... 'What did you do?'... It's not really any of their business.

The worst part is their attitude. The way they speak to you and stuff. The boarding house staff, tutors for each year. They work on a roster. They are all white – except one, she is part Native American heritage, something like that.

Year 9 has been hard. Each year group in boarding is different. Groups and stuff... because there's only a few girls in each year level.

Because we started as a small group, four of us in year 7, we just bonded, we started so small and got excited about expanding our friendship group.

We yarned about aspects of boarding school such as freedom, home and friendship. One student asked if we could make the topic for our study 'anything about boarding'. As a group we yarned about that concept, and all five students were happy to keep the topic as 'boarding school' rather than narrow it down to one particular aspect. At the end of the session, I asked students to spend the next week thinking about 10 to 15 things that were really important to them for others to know, especially their audience (teachers and the principal) about their experiences as Aboriginal boarders. The students were asked to take 10 to 15 images that showed these things, which they could email to me or hold onto until I returned to College B.

Originally, I thought in line with College A, that maybe some of the boarders at College B might ask to meet individually to have more time to yarn through their images. The girls, however, said they felt shy and asked if they could work in pairs or in a group instead. I believe this was most likely due to the small size of the sample at College B, and the bond that the students had formed, which meant they liked to keep together, rather than being separated. At College A, the individual interviews had been more important to the students as there were so many voices in the yarning circles, which meant that many students did not get as much time to explain their pictures, especially the younger and quieter students.

The first group to yarn about their images was formed by the three youngest students at College B. We started with a general yarn before they started to discuss the images on their own.

Imagine if there was only you three here as Aboriginal girls. Or even less, just two of you.

No... I... that wouldn't work. I think they would be very dependent on each other.

It would be tougher.

Yeah. Harder.

Yeah.

It's like... a silent agreement that we've all signed that we're here for each other. Like, I tend to tell [older Aboriginal student] if I see stuff going on, out of school anything. But when it comes to my own personal stuff I tend to, I'm not really... we each trust each other.

You kind of lean on each other?

Yeah, definitely.

Rather than the counsellor.

There's two counsellors, they're very... 'by the book'.

A bit stiff. They are older, late thirties.

I went once... to get out of class! [Laughter.]

I feel closer to teachers, my old teacher I used to go up to in recess or whatever, and if I had problems in the boarding house, and I talked to the head of chapel services, and she is super awesome. She will let me stay in her office and won't ask any questions, and wait for me if I feel the need to tell. Teachers know a lot more about me. Obviously they talk to the counsellors to pass on the information but I [would] rather talk to teachers.

Have all of you got someone here at school you can talk to if you need to?

I don't know, I don't really get along with teachers.

I had a teacher, but she left. She was so amazing. Remember Miss W?

Oh yeah, she was so adorable!

One day in the elevator she swings her coat over her shoulder and goes, 'Paris Hilton, eat your heart out!' [Laughter.]

She worked here for 23 years, she retired.

She had braces!

So cute!

Now we have a new tutor and I hate her... she's so mean. She yells all the time and the entire first term, we were supposed to be doing board. And she was like, 'No, we are doing this instead.' And the day it was due then she started blaming us, and she said some very not nice words, unpleasant words that she's not supposed to say.

My teacher walks into you if you don't move!

But... Some try to be relatable.

Do teachers know you're Indigenous?

Teachers, when they find out I'm Indigenous, if we're, like, studying Indigenous rights, or just studying Indigenous culture in general they will go, 'Oh, what's this mean?' to me, or, 'Can you tell me what this is?' and I'm like, just because I'm Aboriginal, doesn't mean I'm an expert or just know all these things out of nowhere! [Laughter.]

There's no Aboriginal staff in this school, no Aboriginal teachers. There are a few other day girls who are pale-skinned Aboriginal.

This school understands there is gonna be things we have to go home for, and times we can't be here. The [scholarship fund] has told us our school is one of the best in terms of cultural support. We've heard that some other schools won't even fly the flag.

In general, you think teachers expect less of Aboriginal students or is that not the case?

Definitely, yes.

Yes [all in agreement].

It's like a common stereotype, no matter where you go. Primary school, sixty, eighty percent of Aboriginal kids... they still think all Aboriginals are drunks, or drug addicts. The horrible stereotype is always gonna be there.

Like, were all gonna end up homeless!

Sometimes they try not to make it obvious, but when you answer a question they are like [surprised], 'Oh! You got it...' and yeah. [Laughter.]

In primary school I had this one teacher who used to tell me I was good at something, but I wasn't good at it. He did that for every subject, and then he had me for PE, the thing I'm actually good at. And then he was completely dumbfounded like, 'She can actually... do something!' When he said it he'd always be like, 'You'll get there.'

Yeah... when they go over something in class and they are, like, 'Does anyone need extra help?' and then... they just look straight at me.

At College B, student images were literal, as well as symbolic, and covered many aspects of their experiences.



I saw that and I thought of the Stolen Generations and how they were trying to kill out Indigenous people. Making the people... trying to make us white. But see that little black part in the middle, no matter how much you try to make us white, there will always be the part that is Black. Racism here, it's not a major thing but it's here and you can't really escape it.



Taking a picture of different roads is like the directions we go. The opportunities boarding has provided and stuff.



This is an old wheel. It's not just the boarding house, but here, we are institutionalised. It feels like we are assimilating and stuff. But, like, recently, you've seen people going back to natural remedies and traditional healers in Australia. Over in New Zealand you have the decision to see a traditional healer or a doctor. It's kind of like [with the] Stolen Generation they were making us to assimilate into the white society, but recently you see the back-peddalling, people trying to get culture back. And the wheel is also man-made, ignoring nature but eventually nature overpowers. You can see it with our environment and stuff. We have fake grass here at school, but plants are starting to grow through it, weeds coming through... It's like my personal history.

As discussed in Chapter 4, painful moments in Aboriginal history seemed to exist in the present during some of the yarns with students at College B, with the girls speaking about things including the Stolen Generations and colonisation, which happened before their birth, showing a:

different conceptualisation of past/present time... concepts of 'here-now time' and 'everywhen'... Aboriginal people may not see the importance of being able to separate past and present on a longitudinal calendar axis and, instead, would rather use an event/time orientation framework... culturally relevant and socially sanctioned events as the 'memory milestones' (Janca & Bullen 2003, p. 4)

The impact that a difference conceptualisation of time had on students within this study is discussed further in Chapter 7, as it relates to their boarding school experience. Different expectations were also yarned about by the students at College B in relation to academic standards. One student showed this through an image of a solitary flower, describing how each person at boarding goes at their own pace:



The meaning is that were all gonna be progressing at our own little paces and stuff, but, like, a large part of starting here was, like, I was a top student back before I started here at my old school, and when I got here I was like at the bottom of the class. It was kind of, like, got me down a little bit. Over the years I've learned that we're going at our own paces and we might not, like, won't achieve at as a high standard as someone else, but there's different circumstances that we've been in and were all just learning, really. Like they told us it was going to be hard. But they didn't really go into detail and stuff, just that it's gonna be a higher standard. But it was just a real shock to the system. The first report card. Even just, like, the first test or assignment we had to get done. You just didn't realise how full-on it was going to be. And there's nothing really to prepare you for that. Maybe a transition starting

the year before we come would be good because this has been a common problem among [scholarship fund] students, the first year.



It's, like, presenting yourself depending on who you are with, and when, like you have these two different sides, but you are kinda the same. It's the same surface, but it's just cracked. Yeah. It's a rough surface. Boarding, maybe, it's rough. Even though you don't get homesick anymore, you still get pissed off. At [boarding house parents] and stuff. And there's, like, I don't know. They yell at you for being late... A foundation. It represents the opportunities here. Even though you hate them, they are building you up to something.



Boarding house is warm, through the people and teachers... students. I took a picture of these succulents. They look like a little community. We're from

different paths. Um, roots, different roots and backgrounds, but we're all coming together becoming a community in the boarding house.



The outside of the tree it has a solid appearance. But on the inside it's kind of rotted down. Away, it's how you feel when you are going through a rough time at boarding, when family members have died and stuff. When you could go home but you've made the decision to stay and not fall behind and so you have to carry on like you're ok, even though you're not. It feels like you are letting part of your cultural identity go when you do stuff like that, before I started this term, and my great-grandmother just passed away just before I had to leave [home to come back to school for term]. And Mum was, like, 'You can stay back if you want but it will take about 3 weeks.' But I was in senior production and I had rehearsals, and my report card wasn't that great last semester. So I made the decision to go back. And everyone understood perfectly but I felt really bad about it. I was on [the] plane [thinking], 'What if I keep making these decisions?' Not participating in culture and that. It probably won't be a part of me anymore.



It's directions. It spins around. And reaching that direction. Like you can't control everything. You can spin it around and crank it up and down, but when you are not there, the wind will spin it whatever way. And it seems pretty ridiculous to stand out there and try to control everything. Trying to stop it moving. Like friends and family at home changing.

In our next session, our yarning circle in the same room opened with a broad discussion about the week prior. In a circle, we laid out the images students had taken to discuss a theme each, moving them into piles according to themes as students discussed them. The themes that students decided upon within this process were:

The push and pull of home and school
 Rules and regulations/feeling trapped
 Disconnected from the outside world
 Losing culture
 Growth/change due to boarding school
 Lack of control/letting go
 Being two different people
 Changing due to boarding school
 Opportunities
 Independence
 Bright future at the end (boarding school is worth it in the end)
 Friends becoming a community
 Lack of cultural recognition by the school

At the end of this session, the boarding students were still yarning about serious topics, brought up by the events of the day, which involved a non-Indigenous boarder going home because of self-harm in the boarding house.

Before I came here I didn't know there was cutting and suicide, I didn't know they were things. I had a happy childhood.

I know lots of girls in my year that do... I guess it's their personal response to life and boarding... it changes and varies for different people. Sometimes it hits harder for others.

Are those sort of issues talked about? Do teachers, or someone else, assist you with these things? Counsellors?

Counsellors.

Yeah, they try to get us to go.

Counsellors! [Laughing.]

We do have counsellors, so they always say, 'if there's anything wrong...'

They do say that quite frequently. Or if they see that we are down, they will come and speak to you. My maths teacher is always hassling me. I don't get along with him that well, so I don't talk back or anything. So he's like, 'oh... what's wrong? Are you depressed?' and I'm like, '...go away, go away, go away!' [Laughter.]

And here in the boarding house it's usually three people in a room. It depends how many people they want to cram into the boarding house. By year 11 you get your own room. But we chose to live together. It's only

meant to be for one person, but because we split it into two. We're above the year 10s.

Sometimes it affects me being close when people are upset and I make sure they are all right, I just want to make sure that mentally and physically, they're all right.

You have to think about yourself sometimes. Particularly in the boarding house. It's especially hard when your roommate is having a hard time. You can't just ignore her crying and just doing your work [laughter]... but, really, there are other times when you do have to put yourself first.

With sections of printed transcripts, students themed their yarning data into themes according to those that emerged from their images, in the same way as described for College A. Table 5 shows examples of the images and text according to theme.



Sometimes in the boarding house you feel like you can't go out and experience the world like everyone else, because there's so many rules and regulations. That's this picture of a lock. Being a boarder. It's holding us back from the wide world. It has a cultural meaning as well, it's like just beyond that gate it's just like... bush.

The push and pull of home and school

Rules and regulations

Disconnected from the outside world



When I got here it was just so different to what I was used to. And stuff. I don't know. I just felt, like, I don't know. And also just stickin' out from the rest because of our, like... skin colour and... identity and culture. The way we speak, that was another. It might be challenging and it might look ugly. All the scrub up top was all dead. There is only room for one person, and you have to go alone. Don't worry about where you come from or difficulties in the past, boarding will make you strong and lead you to a path you're destined for. You see this photo and you look through the gap and there's

Changing due to being at boarding school

Independence and doing it alone

Bright future at the end of the journey

the calmness of the bushes and the freedom outside.



The boarding house, the roof just dips in. And I kind of saw that as displacement, but embracing the normal. 'Cause everything still works. The boarding house isn't broken just because of that bit... I have [the other Indigenous boarders], but there's no other Aboriginal girls in my year, no investment in culture. And it's just saying even though they might see me as weird and behave differently it's still fine.

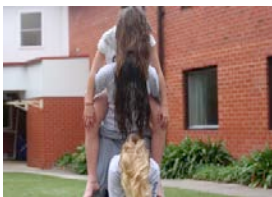
Lack of cultural recognition by the school



We are all gonna go through that stage when we feel all alone. And we kinda have to be there for each other when we go through that stage.

Friends as a community

Supporting one another



How we work together through hard times just kind of prevails 'cause we help each other.

Friends helping each other



It's a rocky road, but when you get beyond it's smooth, and never ends. School is like that, assignments and stress, but once you are into life you will settle down and the path will be nice and easy.

Boarding school is journey that is worth it in the end

Table 5: Theming of images and text

As with Chapter 4, I provide an example of one of the yarns that a student had regarding her pictures and their meanings, to give the reader insight into the flow of the yarning process at College B. This yarn was with Student Z, who was in year 12.

I know we've talked a bit about being away from school. You mentioned sorry business was the reason. How long did you stay away for?

There's been a lot, actually. It's always happened just when I'm flying back to school or right at the beginning. That's the reason why I don't go back. If it was in the middle of the term I would turn around and it would be easier to go back for sorry business because I wouldn't be constantly worrying about how I'm performing. But because it's right at the start of term I don't turn around and go back.

So sometimes, you find out sorry business is happening just when you get back to school, but stay at school?

Yeah. And lots of times because everyone is so busy with it all, everything that is happening while I'm not there, like, they even forget to notify me... and heaps of times, like, going to court and everything, they forget to notify me. Then I'll be talking and someone just casually drops it and then I... I'm, like, 'I didn't know.' It stresses me out a lot and I get a bit cut. And feel further isolated as well and stuff... like, it's just another added complex issue to boarding as well. Like just forgetting to tell me, because they are so into what's happening. My Mum is worried about upsetting me and stuff, but then she forgets to tell me.

If you have lots of business happening in the community would it ever make you want leave boarding school?

Yeah, yeah, for sure. For me, it's an absolute decision to push myself to go back to school. Because once I'm back with family for sorry business, I have some sense of responsibility that I have to stay until everyone's calmed down and stuff. You can't just go for a few weeks, that's putting a rush on things. And, like, my family is really big as well. We have lots of trouble with depression and suicide. Coming from a community where suicides happen so regularly, even if you were only to go back for a few days, you would be constantly flying back and forth... there's no way you could be on top of school work. Going back also puts that extra pressure on, because you can't catch up.

When sorry business happens and you can't get back home... does it affect your schoolwork?

Yes, yeah, absolutely. Like you are constantly thinking about it and stuff, yeah. I think for me sometimes if I am doing something I enjoy it goes away, but if I sit down and start thinking then... I get really stressed out when stuff like that happens and I can't concentrate. And then [boarding house mother] has to talk to me about concentrating at school.

For me sometimes it's a push to do better.

Data analysis

Data analysis by the Aboriginal girls at College B indicated that boarding school was seen as one of a few options available to them, in gaining a decent education. This linked to the idea that home would not be home after education in the city, and the changes they identified in themselves as people due to the boarding school experience. Being an Aboriginal girl in a white school was an issue, and it was tied to feelings of self-consciousness, the lack of Indigenous content in what the students were learning, and whole-school awareness in the day school. Boarding was described as not being a home away from home, possibly in relation to the feelings of cultural dislocation and some disconnect between home and family. Finally, important themes were the connections formed within the small Indigenous boarding cohort as well as with other friends in. The main themes decided upon by students in their data analysis are listed below.

Lack of understanding about Aboriginality and lack of culture at school
 The pressures from home and school push and pull on both sides
 Boarding makes me feel like I am losing my culture, like I am changing or assimilating
 Moving away from community is necessary to get a good education
 Boarding school is a tough journey that is worth it for the opportunities at the end

Textual data examples, according to theme, are included in Table 6: Textual examples of main themes, College B.

| Themes | Textual Data |
|--|---|
| Boarding makes me feel like I am losing my culture, like I am changing or assimilating | <p><i>When I came here, I didn't speak that great English. Where I come from, we just use like really bad slang, and so all my words... I could read and write but I wasn't good at it. You know when someone speaks and you just know they're Aboriginal? Just the way they talk... that was me, and um... I think that over the years I've kind of changed. When I go home, I speak and act normal. But when I come here to school I've got this accent comin' on, and yeah.</i></p> <p><i>When I go home I feel like I've changed. The friendships you had before, when you start hanging out with new people they just bag you out saying, 'oh, you're white now!' You change the way you speak, all proper now and that... you just get bagged out for the smallest things, clothes and everything. I wouldn't have thought I'd changed, until someone pointed it out in a bad way. Now I'm really self-</i></p> |

| <i>Themes</i> | <i>Textual Data</i> |
|---|---|
| | <i>conscious when I go into community and I wonder, 'Am I really recognised as one of them? Am I seen differently?'</i> |
| Lack of culture at boarding school is difficult | <p><i>Boarding... the friends I had ... it's happened for the better. I still feel bad because I used to speak slang but now, I don't and I feel like when I go back home I'm speaking differently and I'm less Aboriginal in a way. In my mind there's like a switch mode... you change the way you speak depending on where you are and who you're with and that.</i></p> <p><i>I really wish we had an Indigenous person to talk to. 'Cause in some schools they have that, an Indigenous support officer. I reckon that would be good for all schools no matter how small the Indigenous population is. It's not a full-on counselling session but it's someone to talk to, completely.</i></p> |
| Friends become a community, helping each other | <i>I think also each other. Whenever something bad happens I just go to [Student Z]. And, yeah, just then I will sleep in her room or something like that. It's a big factor. If [Student Z] wasn't here, I probably wouldn't still be here at boarding.</i> |
| Moving away from community is necessary to get a good education | <i>I used to speak so terrible, but now, even when I was talking to my brother in year 7 and he said I speak more clear and different... better.</i> |
| Community doesn't have many opportunities | <p><i>Yeah, I don't know either. It's like, at home, young teenage girls. Pregnant. I have a lot of cousins who end up in a lot of fights because they are pregnant to other people's boyfriends and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>There is no chance that I will be returning to my home after uni. Not at all. No chance I will go back home after I finish! It's not a place you want to raise kids in. It's an ice [drug] epidemic right now.</i></p> <p><i>Since coming here I've broadened my horizons about opportunities and that. I want to go. I want to go back, but then I don't... but yeah. But I want to help my community, help my family out.</i></p> |
| The pressures from home and school push and pull on both sides | <i>My mum was in a domestic violence situation... I left for boarding in year 9 and that was based on what was happening at home. At boarding I had the best opportunities and stuff. I had plenty of opportunities to leave, but was always on two opposing sides... to a point until I was like, why am I still staying here? So the first</i> |

| <i>Themes</i> | <i>Textual Data</i> |
|--|--|
| | <p><i>decision I just made was to go home... After a while, I realised for myself why I needed to be at boarding school... I was still a thousand miles away from it and it still affected me, so well it's like... If I went to the school there at home, I'd be exposed to it a lot more, 'cause I'd have to go back home... it took me a lot longer to [drop out, living far away at boarding]. And just the scholarship, it's like all the money that's been put into it, and all the people who were trying to help me. I just felt guilty about that. Kind of took so long for me to say, 'I don't want to do this anymore.'</i></p> <p><i>Mum uses it against me. If something bad happens between us she's like, 'It's just because you're at that school,' and, 'You're changing,' or, 'You're turning into one of them'... when I come home, sometimes I feel a bit left out. I don't know if that's just me, but, like... I feel different, being there I guess.</i></p> |
| Lack of understanding about Aboriginality at boarding school | <p><i>One year we were all playing touch football and some comments were made, like not racist or anything but it was just, like, that I should be more like [Student k] and be good at basketball or some kind of sport. Yeah, and they ask me if I can sing! And I'm like, 'No, I'm not Cathy Freeman, no, I'm not Jessica Mauboy.' I can't sing or do sport! [Laughter.]</i></p> |
| Lack of culture in classes at boarding school | <p><i>I've had a few encounters of direct racism at this school. But I remember one thing, when I met my best friend when I started here, I told her a few weeks later that I was Aboriginal. She, like, took a few steps back from me. Now she understands but at first it hurt, and then I realised she probably wasn't expecting that from me. It was probably me skin colour or that, 'cause I'm pale and that. But I think it wasn't comparing me to anyone just taken aback. Because I'm Aboriginal she had to approach me in a different way?</i></p> <p><i>We only study Aboriginal stuff in history, but sometimes they cut that bit out. We are learning about early settlers and our teacher has only brought up Aboriginal stuff because I've intervened. She was, like, they did all this great stuff.</i></p> <p><i>In English, they study Indigenous poems, but it's a unit and I've not heard of any classes doing that unit since. My three years here, English is the only time I'd learned anything focused on Indigenous people.</i></p> |

Table 6: Textual examples of main themes, College B

On my next visit, I discussed with College B students my own understandings of their yarns. The students agreed that they were fair understandings of their voice regarding boarding school experiences as Indigenous students. The student data included many examples of the pull of cultural and family obligations, especially during difficult circumstances. Student Z explained that sometimes the choice to go to boarding school is made to escape community, but, even still, the pull of obligation to community and family is experienced while at boarding school, similar to this concept discussed by students at College A. This tension had led to her dropping out for six months the year before, but she had returned to College B to complete year 12. The push and pull between going home and maintaining culture, and staying at boarding school, also involved the way students described their personal change and growth over time at boarding school.

The data analysis conducted by the students at College B indicated that students were unhappy with the education on offer in their home communities, and had come to understand that boarding school, or moving elsewhere, was the only way for them to access good quality education. Making new friends, and strong connection between the Aboriginal boarders, were themes identified by the students. Friendships were noted by the students as encouraging them to stay on at boarding school, as a coping mechanism and as a way to lessen the cultural clash and homesickness they experienced at boarding school. The support of Aboriginal boarding friends was valued over professional assistance, such as that provided by the school counsellor, for cultural reasons (Aboriginality) and relationships. The challenge of being Aboriginal in a non-Indigenous school was a theme the students identified as emerging from their data, as was the lack of Indigenous content in classes. The complexity of attending a school with a very small Aboriginal boarding program encompassed the importance of whole-school understanding of Aboriginal peoples, histories and cultures in making boarding school a welcoming place for them.

We concluded our discussion regarding the data analysis and outcomes in session 8, and students began to yarn about their ideas for the student exhibition in which they would be able to share both their photographs and some of their findings, based on the themes they found in the data analysis process. As a group, the students discussed their images while trying to select one that they wanted to present to the audience, along with a yarn about what the image meant. The students were very

excited for their exhibition and said that they were really pleased with the results of their research. As there were only five Aboriginal boarders in the research community, the exhibition was designed for a small audience. College B offered to provide catering for the exhibition and provide a venue for student exhibition.

Finishing the dilly-bag

On the evening of the exhibition, the students displayed their images, which I had had printed professionally and brought to College B. The space had a large TV screen, which allowed students to display their selected quotes and for a selection of their images to be screened as their audience perused the printed collection of images. Just before the audience started arriving for the exhibition, the youngest of the boarding students asked the other boarding students if she could perform a song for the exhibition, to which the group agreed. The girls also decided at this point that they would hold a question and answer session at the end of the exhibition, and they nominated the oldest student to deliver acknowledgement of country.

As guests arrived they looked through the printed images which had been laid out on two long tables, as the Aboriginal students walked around with them, some explaining their images. The deputy principal who was in attendance congratulated the students and when a natural silence fell on the room, the student who had been nominated delivered acknowledgement of country. At this time, the youngest student started singing unaccompanied the words of a song titled *Royals*; her lyrics appeared to speak in some ways about her boarding school experiences.

I've never seen a diamond in the flesh... I cut my teeth on wedding rings in the movies, and I'm not proud of my address, in a torn-up town, no postcode envy.

My friends and I we've cracked the code, we count our dollars on the train to the party, and everyone who knows us knows, that we're fine with this, we didn't come from money...

But everybody's like, Cristal, Maybach, diamonds on your timepiece, jet planes, islands, tigers on a gold leash, we don't care; we aren't caught up in your love affair, and we'll never be royals... it don't run in our blood.

That kind of lux just ain't for us; we crave a different kind of buzz. Let me be your ruler, you can call me Queen Bee, and baby I'll rule...let me live that fantasy.

Afterwards, students picked up their selected image from the table, and gave a short yarn about its meaning and why they had selected it to share with the audience. It was moving to observe the change in the way the students were able to now speak openly and individually about their boarding experiences, compared with at the beginning of the research. Each student spoke of the difficulty of being away from home and community, the lack of connection they experienced when they return to their communities, and the feeling of being different to the way they had been before boarding school. Each of the five speeches contained the words ‘opportunity’ and ‘pathways’. I was aware of the fact that for many of the students their sense of identity was connected to their involvement in their communities. As Nakata (2013) states, some Indigenous people feel that ‘if you do not have community connections or not living “your culture” in the community, you can’t be accepted as Indigenous’ (p. 139).

The students opened the floor for questions or audience comments as the exhibition was coming to a close. This was both brave and unscripted, and allowed the girls to truly speak from the heart about some interesting and difficult topics. In attendance were College B’s deputy principal, several teachers that the participants had chosen to invite, some family members and several local Indigenous community members who had heard about the exhibition. One teacher spoke about the change she had seen in several of the girls, as students she had taught since they arrived at the school in year 7. She asked the girls how they had felt when they first arrived to board. Student D responded that it was difficult and painful to be thrown into a new and strange environment, but that after connecting with other Koori girls they had formed their ‘own little world that no-one got’.

Each of the girls spoke in their own ways about the change from primary school to boarding school as a being a difficult experience, with a rapid drop in the number of fellow Indigenous students and lack of Indigenous content in curriculum, as well as the need to quickly develop Standard Australian English skills. Students explained that they had to ‘change the way I talk’, ‘change my English to fit in’ and for others to ‘understand what I was saying’. Student D said Aboriginal English, which she mentioned was also spoken by some of her non-Indigenous friends at her school back home, was a foreign language to students at College B. A question came from a female teacher regarding the process of ‘walking in two worlds’ and how this felt for the boarders. One student explained:

I see myself as having four parts; one when I am with my family, one when I am with my friends, one when I am with my school friends, and one when I am in front of teachers.

This student spoke of having different ways of behaving, speaking and being depending on her context and company.

I find it hard sometimes being in so many parts but it all comes together eventually.

Another student described her experience as being sometimes difficult to manage.

When you go home, you are treated differently. When you are at boarding school, you feel different. People look at you different and you stand out. I didn't know I would change when I come here and that people at home would pay you out when you go home. It's hard.

The process of change and the students' perceptions of how others (both at school and at home) viewed them differently was clearly articulated; with the audience surprised at the candid and frank answers given by students, which many commented on to me after the exhibition.

At the end of the student yarns, I asked the students a question regarding Indigenous content in their day classes. Student Z described feeling 'invisible at this school' because they 'never hear anything about Aboriginal people'. Another student added that when they learn about Aboriginal people, it is always in a 'separate little unit, not spread out or across lots of areas', making it difficult:

...for me and the other students. Like when they do mention it, I feel like everyone is looking at me. I look around and they aren't actually looking, but it just feels like they are... like a tension in the room, because I'm there. If I wasn't there I feel like they might have had better conversation.

The deputy principal said the school could possibly have a term where all students do Indigenous art, stating 'it can't be too hard for us to include more Indigenous content'. The students were excited and responded confidently and openly to the questions given to them. Teachers were intrigued by the concept of including more Indigenous content, and after the event several teachers came to me with ideas they had thought of during the speeches toward increasing Indigenous content in their classes.

The research at College B culminated in the students speaking up to their intended audience, including school leadership. The deputy principal who closed with a short speech of thanks to the students, noted: ‘...the connection between you and Jessa, and the love between you is visible. Thank you for bringing our girls closer together and inspiring them to speak about their experiences.’ I presented the school with an artwork I had drawn that reflected how I saw the girls I had worked with: travelling on journeys from their communities, but with their identity as Aboriginal women at the centre of all they do. The exhibition closed with the youngest participant giving a short thank you to me for ‘helping them to share their feelings and their voices... basically, thank you for noticing us and listening to us.’ This was one of the most important things I noted from the evening – that the students truly felt they had a voice, that they were able to speak up clearly and confidently, knowing how they felt, and that they felt listened to and noticed. This confirmed that photoyarn and the research at College B had met the aim of giving voice to five Indigenous boarders at College B, and the research itself had created an avenue for students to make change in their own lives, their boarding school and their communities.



CHAPTER 6

College C

While Chapters 4 and 5 investigate Aboriginal girls' experiences attending non-Indigenous boarding schools in Australia, this chapter looks at an Indigenous boarding school for girls in Aotearoa New Zealand. College C, who has agreed to be named in this research, is St Joseph's Māori Girls' College, also known as Hato Hōhepa in te reo Māori.

College C is a Māori secondary girls' boarding school founded in 1867 with a unique history among all boarding schools in New Zealand, for its early inclusion of Māori practices. Because College C is an international comparison, this chapter will differ slightly from Chapters 4 and 5, starting with a condensed history of the school. College C is located 20 minutes by car from Napier, a regional North Island town. The college is unique in that its ethos is centred on Māori and Catholic values, namely manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and aroha, which in English (as described in the reference at the beginning of this thesis) roughly translate in English to care and hospitality for others, strong relationships, empathy and love. College C has a motto and statement that explains the basis of all pedagogy and the ethos of the school: *There is no better way that a Māori can come to know his Māoritanga except through his Atuatanga, and there is no better way that a Māori can come close to God except through his Māoritanga.*

While looking through the extensive school archives at College C, I found a letter written by College C's founder Euphrasie Barbier, written on 1 October 1873.

The letter urged the Māori missionary of the local parish, Father E. Reigner, to reconsider his refusal to allow Māori language to be used in the school. It states, ‘With regard to your recommendation not to allow the children to speak the Māori language... These children cannot be expected to hold a conversation in a language like English which is so difficult.’ The extensive school archives show that Māori girls of College C were seen as valuable scholars who deserved an excellent education comparable to that of any other student in the country, and that the Catholic education of such students was always at the heart of the school from the earliest days. This was fascinating for me, because colonisation was occurring in Aotearoa New Zealand at that time especially through schooling, and boarding schools in particular. The aims of the school were not only to give Māori students European skills, but also to encourage their cultural practices, and this history continues within College C today. Another letter from Barbier, written on 15 June 1884, even urges the sisters teaching at the school to learn Māori: ‘Do ask the sisters engaged in it to learn the language. For a very long time I have been urging these sisters to teach the catechism, their prayers... and the hymns in Māori. It should have been done already!’

College C produced many of Aotearoa New Zealand’s earliest Māori teachers and nurses, who went on to work in communities across the country, spreading the reputation of the college as a place for education of Māori women to succeed in both Māori and Pākehā life (van der Linden 1990). In 1946, College C gained full registration as an Aotearoa New Zealand secondary school, the Native Schools inspectors who visited the college noting its ‘friendly atmosphere’ and ‘cleanliness’ – attributes that continue to be seen at the college today. The college integrated into the Aotearoa New Zealand state education system in 1982, the integration agreement emphasising what is called the ‘special character’ of the school, namely, the blend of Māori and Catholic ways of being throughout all aspects of the college.

The official school history notes September 1987 as marking the appointment of the first Māori principal, Miss Georgina Kingi. This occasion could not have been recognised for the decades of value it would later bring to generations of Māori, including the students I spoke with during my time at College C. Miss Kingi’s appointment is described by van der Linden (1990):

Miss Kingi was welcomed by the representatives of the Kahungunu Tribe. She came onto the school marae supported by her parents, relative and members of her Ngati Awa Tribe. Many Taonga were presented to the new

Rangatira, including a beautiful korowai, from the Ngapuhi Tribe. Every Māori tribe in Aotearoa New Zealand was represented at this official pōwhiri... 'Te Karere' filmed this important event for N.Z. television viewers (p. 80).

Heralding a new era of Māori education in Aotearoa New Zealand, Miss Kingi's appointment followed her own schooling at St Joseph's Māori Girls' College from 1957 to 1962. Miss Kingi had returned to the college in 1970, teaching Māori studies; in 2016 she was still teaching te reo Māori classes, in addition to continuing in her role as principal of the school.

Today, College C uses minimal technology. This old-fashioned way of learning includes the use of dated resources (for example, a te reo Māori language booklet published several decades ago is still in use by students, and overhead projectors with transparencies for handwritten notes and words to songs are projected on the wall in the chapel). Students learn through *kanohi ki te kanohi*, or 'face to face' learning. Examples of concepts in regular classes are linked to *tikanga* Māori (cultural protocols), allowing students to connect their language skills with cultural knowledge and academic learning. The boarding aunts who are known as the *whaea atawhai* draw on *tikanga* Māori in running the boarding house. Such values are instilled in the students not as rules but as behaving in accordance with ways of which their *tupuna* and *whānau* would approve.

It was important to me as an Aboriginal woman to meet Miss Kingi in person before commencing any discussion about potential research at College C. I had never visited a Māori school, but I knew College C was a place that had produced many of Māoridom's most influential *wāhine* (women). After my Māori partner (who is known to Miss Kingi through family connections) sent an email vouching for me, I was invited to visit and stay at the school, in a small room attached to the boarding house. I travelled to College C, and on my first day was invited to attend the regional finals of the 2016 Ngā Manu Kōrero, the national Māori speech competition for secondary students, with a number of staff and a large group of College C students.

I had learned about the Ngā Manu Kōrero competition through posts my partner's *whānau* had made on Facebook, and I remembered feeling impressed by the powerful and moving speeches given by students in both te reo Māori and English the year before – speeches about culture, about the power and strength their *tupuna* and *kaumatua* gave them, and about the essential place of te reo Māori within their schools

and broader lives as young Māori. As we entered the venue, the College C girls lined up in the front row, sat down and watched the stage without a sound.

Later, a College C girl was welcomed to the stage to speak among other competitors. My attention was turned directly to her. Not only was this the first girl I would see speaking from College C, but, as a pale-skinned Aboriginal woman, I noticed this student was noticeably paler than most of the other College C girls, who, immaculately dressed, were still sitting perfectly quiet in the front row as more than a hundred students from local schools fidgeted and giggled in the rows behind them. The student on stage began with confidence and pride.

What's your name?

MereKingi.

Are you Māori?

Yes.

...Really?

Alone, she re-enacted a conversation, repeated over and over throughout her young life. MereKingi went on to continue her impromptu kōrero in response to the blind question she had been allocated: 'How do you make your parents proud?' In English, she spoke of how when she was 12 her uncle came to collect her from the Pākehā family who had been raising her, and enrolled her at 'Hāto Hōhepa to get a real education'. Starting at the college with basic te reo and limited understanding of her culture, she spoke of how attending College C taught her who she was, gave her strength, improved her academic achievement, gifted her with hope for the future, introduced her to a whānau of sisters and, most importantly, made her parents proud. Winning her category, MereKingi advanced to the national competition. That day, against hundreds of students and 10 schools, Hāto Hōhepa won every category except one, in which they received second place.

Tertiary study is an expectation after students graduate from College C, with a very high percentage of students each year offered scholarships from Aotearoa New Zealand universities, recognising the College C student work ethic, discipline and sporting, cultural and academic achievements. I asked a whaea atawhai over dinner how this culture had come to exist.

It's Miss [Kingi]. She fights for them. She won't back down, and she won't settle for anything but the best. It's like, she is hard on them, but harder on those outside this place who think that Māori deserve second best. She pushes them to their limits, but she loves them. She loves them and they know that. These girls come from backgrounds of difficulty. When they come here, we feed them well, we teach them well, we keep in touch with their whānau and we make sure that Māoritanga is present in everything we do.

I experienced Māoritanga throughout my first visit at College C. The manaakitanga shown to me as a nervous manuhiri was humbling. As I walked the halls of College C for the first time, I reflected on the fact that they had been walked by generations of Māori wāhine and were still echoing today with waiata, as they have for many decades. The school is imbued with the aroha of women who continue to visit, work at and support the college, and it reminded me of a nest to grow the feathers of tamāhine, powerful wāhine of whom many will fly to great heights.

There are no student laptops or iPads in the classrooms of College C, no iPhones or Facebook in the boarding house— just pens and paper, textbooks, and Māori and Catholic values, following a way of teaching and structured curriculum that has been tried and tested for decades. I wondered why so many Māori girls, with strict instruction and little freedom, chose to board at a school with restrictions that I thought students in Australia would have difficulty with, based on my previous years at a boarding school in Queensland, and my work with students at Colleges A and B. I reflected on this and my initial observation was that I could feel something – and that something binding this community appeared to be the deep, caring connection between staff, students, families, culture and the principal.

At 5:15pm every day, the students of College C make their way to the dining room. Food service is run by students on a rotating roster. The students learn how to prepare kai (food) and wait on others, and they serve each other for every single meal. This is one example of how students practice Māori ways of being, the special character of the school, and Catholic values, which together form the ethos of the college. When I visited the first time I dined with the students, and I learned much about the college from the perspective of the students. 'It was hard and I hated it. I cried for a month,' a young girl said of what it was like when she moved to boarding school.

...Too strict, so many rules. But the aroha and care here, it's whānau... it's always here when you need to come back. Miss Kingi is the reason this school is what it is. She's been here for 30 years. She was the first woman who wasn't a sister to be principal and the only one who has been a principal here since that day.

Over six months, I visited College C four more times, each for five days, sleeping in the same small room in the boarding house. I sometimes had the chance to sit with Miss Kingi in her office. In our kōrero, Miss Kingi reminisced on her days as a student of the college, choosing College C instead of another boarding school, which did not have the 'warmth' of College C, and her years at the helm as the first layperson to ever head the college. On my first visit, she gave me an article her secretary had printed for her, written by a College C old girl, Moana Maniapoto. In *The joys (and trials) of boarding school* (Maniapoto 2015) Moana remarks that she is not at all surprised by the continued success of College C since she graduated in the 1970s:

Georgina Kingi, the principal, runs a tight ship... Our principal in my first year was the formidable Sister Margaret Purdie. I remember a disco... Everyone was too nervous to make a move. Sister Margaret killed the music, stood with her hands on her hips and announced, much to our mortification, **'Girls. Go. And get. A boy. Now!'**... The truth is the nuns were feminists. They showed us that girls *can* do anything... Our nuns would fix the vans and zoom around in them like Batmobiles, shades on and veils flying... it was our tough and fearless nuns who were firmly in charge. There wasn't much they couldn't do... when the odd one came back to school pregnant, the nuns didn't bat an eyelid. They got out their knitting... These women weren't paid, but kaupapa-driven... The nuns have come and gone. But Georgina Kingi hasn't. Thank God for that... The pleats are long gone. But some things haven't changed. Georgina doesn't have a computer or do email. Cell phones are banned from St Joe's... St Joe's always had a massive buy-in from whānau, even back in my day (Maniapoto 2015).

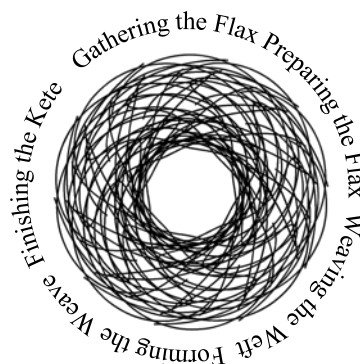
During my first visit, I spoke with Miss Kingi about my research at Colleges A and B. I used a diagram to explain photoyarn, which I hoped to modify for use at College C with Māori students. Entering her office, I noticed Miss Kingi had no computer or laptop. 'I don't have a computer,' she said, almost reading my mind. 'I'm tech-illiterate.' As I explained photoyarn and the dilly-bag as a metaphor for weaving the process together, Miss Kingi exclaimed, 'It's a kete! It's the flax, and the weft and weave, and the end product is the kete. Do you mind?' Quickly writing notes on the diagram, she explained, 'A kete is like a dilly-bag. It is woven by the women and it is a bag that you can fill with other things. It is like the toolbox. That is how we can

describe photoyarn to our girls here. This process makes perfect sense to me.’ I was pleased Miss Kingi was happy with the idea of photoyarn, but one aspect would not be the same: the social media component, as the College C students did not have access to phones or regular use of the internet. Miss Kingi was firm that the research needed to be done *kanohi ki te kanohi*. As such, the method was modified.

Developing kōreropikitia

College C presented me with many challenges as an international site. It also gave me the opportunity to test the photoyarn method with Indigenous boarders in a different context. Before my second visit, I modified photoyarn based on my discussions with Miss Kingi, into a variation I termed *kōreropikitia* (photo-discussion). The photoyarn process (as seen in Table 1) was modified to fit with the Māori context of College C, the method itself re-named *kōreropikitia*.

Kōreropikitia: Weaving the Kete



Gathering the Flax

- Researcher returns to school after initial visit
- Researcher forms relationships and connections with community at College C and spends time in school with staff and students, as well as *kaumatua* and *whānau*

Preparing the Flax

- Selection of 10 students, in conjunction with principal and *whaea atawhai*
- Introductory *hui*, sharing stories and looking for connections through relatedness
- Students and researcher discuss potential audiences for College C research outputs
- Students and researcher discuss *kōreropikitia*, including its process and purposes, and how the project will run
- Informed consent gathered from those in the project

Weaving the Weft

- Hui to discuss ethics of the project and of photography, basic photography skills and how to use digital cameras provided for the project; discuss symbolism and other ways of capturing images that represent ideas in non-realistic ways
- Kōrero on boarding school experiences and aspects that might be explored through photos
- Participants take 10–15 photos about their boarding experiences

Forming the Weave

- Participants given journals and series of sample questions to write in while researcher is not at school
- Hui between students and researcher based on images as a group

Finishing the Kete

- Hui held to theme images, then to theme kōrero data and journal data
- Analysis of visual data, then qualitative data by researcher, checked with students in hui
- Students select the images that best represent overall themes
- Exhibition held at school for chosen audience celebrating end of the project
- Researcher writes project report and shares it with school, participants, whānau whanui and others

In modifying photoyarn to develop kōreropikitia, I considered how photoyarn could work best in a Māori context. While the theoretical underpinning of my research is informed by relatedness theory, I drew upon kaupapa Māori to inform my understanding of how I might research with Māori students in a way that centred their voices. Nepe (1991) describes Kaupapa Māori as the conceptualisation of Māori knowledge, whereby the Māori mind ‘receives, internalises, differentiates, and formulates ideas and knowledge exclusively through Te Reo Māori’ (p. 15). Although my research at College C was not Māori, as I am not Māori, the principles of Kaupapa Māori informed my work, including my use of te reo Māori – using correct terms when discussing research, without simply translating them into English.

As an Aboriginal researcher, I was aware that I had a responsibility to work in a way that honoured and privileged Māori student voices at College C. Kaupapa Māori research principles guided my understanding of this process, as did conversations with kaumatua and kuia (Māori elders) connected with the students at College C. Kaupapa Māori is recognised as having at least six principles, which are described by Smith and Reid (2000) as:

- **Tino Rangatiratanga** (self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, independence)
- **Taonga tuku iho** (cultural and spiritual aspirations, te reo Māori, matauranga Māori, tikanga Māori, ahuatanga Māori)
- **Ako Māori** (Māori pedagogies, teaching and learning practices that follow Tikanga Māori)
- **Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga** (Māori socio-economic disadvantage being the collective responsibility of Māori community to address)
- **Whānau** (family at the centre, relationships and cultural responsibilities as a collective, whanaungatanga), and
- **Kaupapa** (collective commitment and vision, Māori aspirations of political, social, economic and cultural wellbeing).

These principles reinforced my view that, when working with Māori students, my research must empower the voices of Māori students, and my research should advocate for these principles to be achieved in the lives of the students, their broader whānau and communities. This is in line with Mane (2009), who remarks:

Researchers themselves need to gain a clear understanding of Kaupapa Māori and tikanga Māori to guide their practice... by asking questions concerning the purpose of the research to be undertaken; the role of the Government; the decision-making process that determines the research; the need to communicate Māori rights and protocols; and the need for the research to reflect Māori tikanga or the kaupapa of the Māori world... do we actively look to participate in research that will bring about positive change? Is our research designed, led and conducted in ways that seek to create positive change... Does our research give voice to its participants, does it show them that they hold power, is it positioned from Māori thinking and world views? (p. 4).

Gathering the flax

Three weeks before I returned to College C for my second visit to commence research with the students, College C's whānau whanui was rocked by a tragedy at the school, which resulted in the death of a senior student onsite. Students and staff had been accessing support from a Māori deacon, Pā Danny, who was well connected to the school whānau before the incident. I also knew Pā Danny through my partner's whānau, so he had informed me of the incident within days of it occurring. I discussed

my own response to the death with my elders and supervisors in Australia in preparation for my visit.

When I arrived at College C, teachers and students were still frequently speaking of the incident, but they were dealing with their grief and moving on with work and study. School activities at the boarding house had been altered by Miss Kingi to lift the spirits of the students. Activities included more frequent treats, such as trips into town to the cinema, and having Friday nights off from study. A whole-school teacher versus student sports day was organised, for which I was present during my second visit. It was the first of its kind to be held at College C. Students were excited, and laughter filled the campus as teachers and students battled the day away in basketball, hockey and netball matches, with whānau welcomed on campus to support and cheer the games.

Preparing the flax

On the third day of my second visit to College C, I was invited to attend the College Board meeting to meet the school board and introduce my research. The student representative who sits on the board, Student E, was also in attendance at this meeting. With the board, Miss Kingi discussed the student participants. This was a deliberate selection of 10 students who were not too deeply affected by the tragedy, as some students were considered emotionally vulnerable. The final decision regarding which students would participate included consultation between Miss Kingi and the seven whaea atawhai, resulting in two students from each year level being selected as participants. Miss Kingi removed one student who had been close to the student who had recently passed away. Once 10 students had been selected, the school contacted their whānau to explain the basis for this research, and to gain whānau approval for students to participate.

With all parents giving consent for their children to participate, I held an informal hui with the 10 students selected by College C to participate in the research. In our hui, we connected and spoke about ourselves, before students started discussed potential audiences for their research, including the Aotearoa New Zealand Education Ministry, policymakers, whānau and future students. Interestingly, they did not feel teachers, the principal or school staff needed speaking up to, as they felt these people had a good understanding of the boarding experience for Māori girls. We shared stories and I looked for connections between the participants and myself, in line with

relatedness. In this process I found that I knew one student's stepfather, and that a niece of my partner was a friend of one of the participants. The students were excited to find out that my partner was Māori. They asked questions about Aboriginal boarding schools, and shared their excitement about being in the project as we discussed kōreropikitia, including its process and aims. Each of the 10 students gave their informed consent after we read through the relevant paperwork, and we discussed my next visit. I told them how they could contact me in the meantime, including via phone call or email from the school office.

Weaving the weft

On my third visit I arrived at College C in the early evening. On my way to Napier, as I was leaving Wellington International Airport, I had bumped into Matua M, who holds a high-ranked position in the Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He asked me to send his regards to the principal, and remarked, 'Whenever you mention College C in this country, three things come in reply. The first is Miss Kingi. Number 2 is the singing, and 3 is that [College C] is the finest girls' school in the country. As the saying goes, if you've met a St Joe's girl, the pleasure is all yours.'

The next day I organised a research hui with the 10 students after school. This hui was a chance for us to discuss the ethics of the project and the guidelines regarding taking photos within school grounds. We talked through basic photography skills and organised student access to digital cameras. This hui also included discussion about symbolism, and ways of capturing non-realistic images. A number of the students were excited about the project, especially the use of cameras.

The next day over breakfast I asked Whaea J, who was a whaea atawhai in the boarding house, about the Catholic faith of the school. In the hui the day before, a student had mentioned she was about to be baptised, but that she had to get baptised in a church about an hour away from the boarding school. Whaea J explained:

We cannot baptise children here. It's about whakapapa. We have the child in our presence, but it is not their choice alone. If children want to be baptised Catholic, they must return to their whānau to make that decision together. There may have been generations of others who have not been Catholic. We cannot press that upon them.

In the second hui, a short kōrero about boarding school and how they were going with their photography indicated students were very excited and were enjoying

having the freedom to take pictures at school, which Miss Kingi had approved. Some of our kōrero is included below.

What did you know about Hato Hōhepa before you came here?

My aunty told me when I was 9 I was coming here. All the girls in our family have come here.

Me too. I was 11. I was happy. I was excited. I knew about the school. And I knew about Miss.

I didn't choose to come here. It wasn't one of the schools I chose to come to. But I'm glad I'm here, for the opportunities.

Well, before I came to this school, I seen some movies about boarding school and Catholic stuff. I thought it looked exciting. I was excited to be Catholic because then I would be holy. [Laughter.] And yeah. Now... I'm holy! [Laughter.]

I wasn't Catholic before I came here to this school. I'm not allowed. My mum said so. We're Anglican. I can't tell the difference anyway.

Miss [the principal] is really good at making sure people don't jump into it. Like, she, well, she can't make them not do it, but she recommends that people don't just become Catholic straight away. It's pretty easy to get into it, because it feels normal here. She says we should wait a while before deciding to get baptised, to make sure that's what we really want.

I wasn't Catholic when I came here. I'm about to get baptised, actually. I had been going to the Easter festival for a few years at home, though. So it wasn't all new to me. Some of my whānau are Catholic.

What is it like, being at a Māori boarding school?

I was always Māori, but not hard out Māori, you know? Coming here has helped me find out about being Māori. Like lots of girls, I didn't know te reo, or much... I knew tikanga cause of my Nan, but I didn't know much about Māori. Now, when I leave, I will always have that.

It's not important that they are Māori. It's how they treat us.

It wouldn't matter if Whaea was Pākehā. We are taught to respect kaumatua, whether they are Māori or not. They all have their own personalities and ways of treating us. Some are better than others. Some, even if you are crying your eyes out, they just say, 'Nope!' [Laughter.]

Sometimes when I go home, Mum is like, 'Yeah, remember when this happened?' and I'm like, 'No...' and she's like, 'Oh, yeah, you weren't there!'... 'Um... Yeah?' [Laughter.] Yeah, but, like, Mum fills me in, you know. [Laughter.]

Māori boarding schools are having a hard time. I think it's the money. There's no racism here, but there's racism still. If any of us went to one of the other boarding schools for girls around here, we would stick out like a sore thumb. Just not at this school.

If we didn't learn any Māori things in classes, that would be really weird. Like, it probably wouldn't make that much of a difference because the way they teach and everything else around us is Māori, but it would be weird. It's like, at a Māori school, even if the teachers aren't Māori, it's still Māori way... like...

And Miss, if we didn't have Miss... She's a Māori principal.

That day, I gave each of the 10 girls a personal journal with a list of prompting questions they might like to write about over the coming weeks, after I returned to Australia. The journals were a way for students to record their thoughts and think through their ideas in place of the Facebook comments at Colleges A and B. We organised to have a hui the next day, before I left College C, to view and discuss images the students had been taking.

Forming the weave

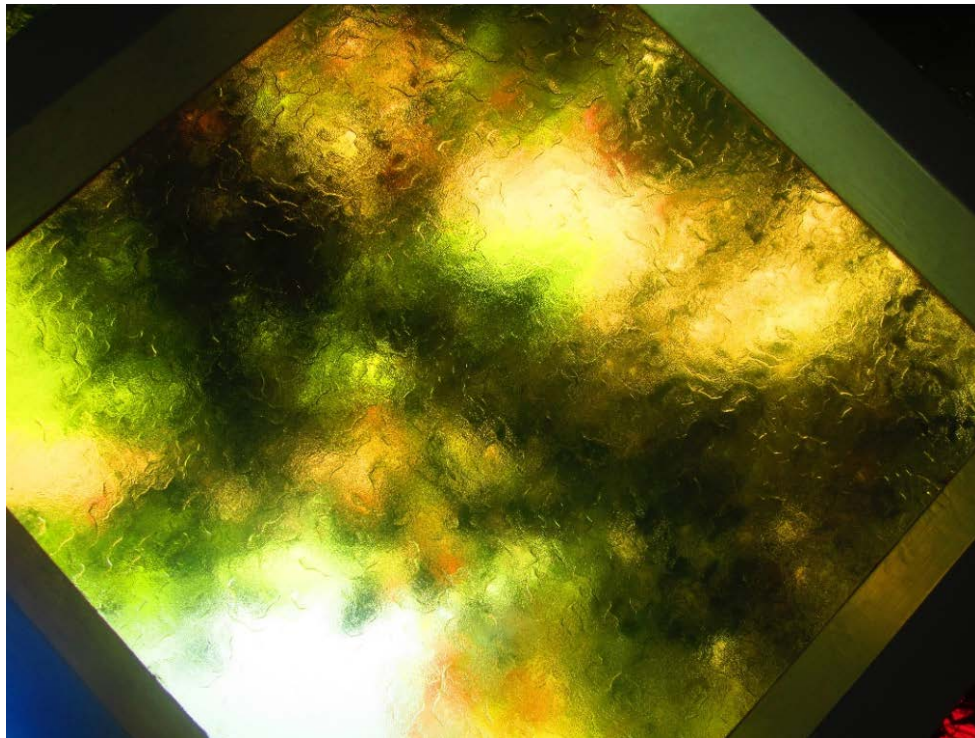
On my last day of my third visit, the research community at College C and I formed a small circle and copied images from the cameras onto my laptop for viewing together. When we started the kōrero, the students conversed as each image popped up on the screen, led initially by the student photographer who took the image. Other students were keen to share their responses to the images, as well as the themes that emerged from the pictures. I recorded the kōrero and saved the student images for us to analyse when I returned to the school. I had worried the girls at College C, the international site to provide a point of comparison in this study, might not have experienced the same relatedness with me as students at College A or College B. This, however, did not appear to affect the interaction between me and the boarding students of College C.

I returned to College C at the end of term 4, just as students were completing their exams and the school year was coming to a close. While school life was busy, I was by now familiar with the students, the routine of the school, and the staff. As such, I easily slipped into the way of life at College C. I gathered the girls to let them know I had arrived and to see how they were going with their exams and their research journals. They were in good spirits and the college seemed 'back to normal',

with an air of excitement as holidays approached. School was finishing up, with activities such as prize giving and Christmas parties on the calendar over the next five days. The 10 students involved in this research were excited to tell me they had written some entries in the journals I had left with them last time I was at College C. The girls left their journals with me, and two students said they had taken more images they would like to add to the research, which they had brought on a digital storage device.

Data analysis

With the journals gathered, we held a hui to first group the images into themes. All the students were keen to share their thoughts on their own images that we had discussed last time, to remind each other of the meanings behind them. We discussed each image individually, looking for the main theme and especially what it was saying about their boarding school experiences.



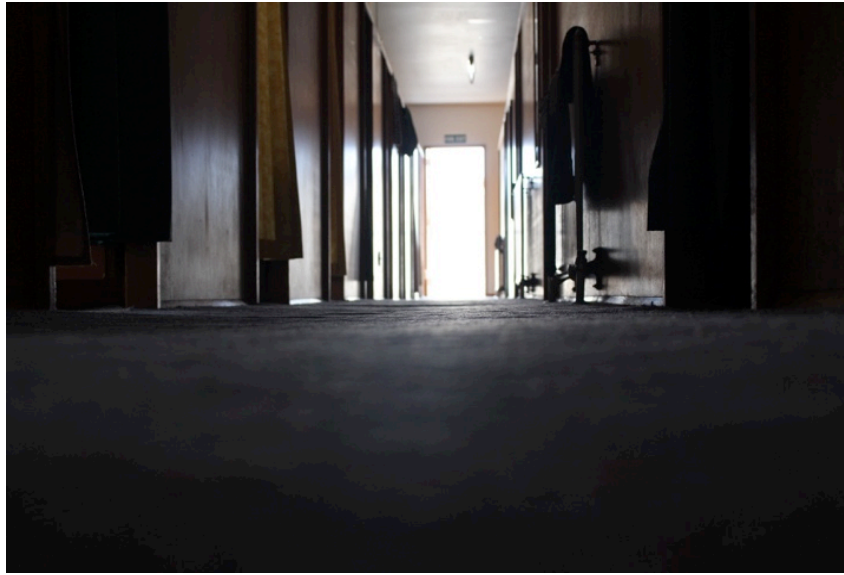
Sometimes, it feels like this school has blurred things, put a filter on things. You see the outside world differently, look at people different. You think differently. It changed the way I see things outside of school.



It's hard knowing you are being watched. It's like that always coming here, everyone knowing you are a St Joe's girl. And always being watched at school... it's not easy.



This kind of ties with the phone, calling home, the graffiti on the panels. It's just... I don't know what it actually says, but it's from... it might be numbers from past students, their phone numbers home, or their names. And I guess it just goes to show that this is like a home of not just yourself, but lots of other people as well. And... a thing like you've 'left your mark here'... but it's not just yours.



That's up in the year 12 area where we sleep and... it's just showing that we're in for the long haul and that there's always an end, like, a way out, at the end...



That's in the chapel, and it's the podium where our principal, Miss Kingi, stands, or anyone who's going to speak in the chapel stands. Personally, if

I'm doing a reading for mass, seeing that podium kind of gives me the courage to do it properly. I get up there and I'm like, 'Oh my God'... and I look down and I'm like, 'I can do it!' I don't know, it kind of gives me that boost... Our altar is made out of the same tree, like half, the same as the altar at Hato Pāora, brother and sister. And that's like being at boarding school, it's more than just being at this boarding school, the Māori boarding schools have a kinship, it's a tight-knit community. And everyone knows everyone! And like, 'Oh, is that what that person looks like...' [Laughter.]

Further images and discussion from the visual data analysis can be seen in Appendix 2. After the images had been themed, students worked to merge themes that were similar or the same, and removed themes they decided were not meaningful to the images as a collection. The themes from the visual data were narrowed down to those listed below.

Commitment to doing their best toward achieving goals,
with the support of many others
Boarding creating lifelong friends who became family/sisters
Being connected to the school family (whānau whanui) or the College C
community
The mana and reputation/history of the school,
and what it means to be a girl of the school
Restrictions, rules and strict timetables
Being away from family
Being disconnected from the outside world
The journey of growing as individuals together

With the visual analysis complete, as a group we took the data from nine written journals (one student had lost hers), separating the comments and arranging each comment into the themes that had emerged from the visual analysis. The girls had been informed before they had been given the journals, that any parts they wanted to keep private they could remove before the group sharing, however no student felt they wanted to remove any pages.

One new theme emerged as students themed their written text, the concept of boarding school being *worth it in the end*. This theme linked with other subthemes that had appeared in the visual analysis, including *a bright light at the end of the tunnel*, *long haul* and concepts related to the bad and the good coming together for an outcome – that for the students boarding was worth it in the end. Examples of the textual analysis are seen in Table 7: Themes from textual analysis, College C.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Student Journals</i> |
|---|---|
| <p>Friends being like family</p> <p>Living together in a close community</p> | <p><i>It has helped build stronger friendships, there are things you can only experience when living with all of your friends. You're actually never alone.</i></p> <p><i>It's like being at a family reunion... like a 24/7 sleepover.</i></p> <p><i>The people at school gather around you rather than your family.</i></p> <p><i>I stay at boarding because I love my girls.</i></p> <p><i>I love being surrounded by friends, who I've come to love.</i></p> <p><i>I love boarding here for all the connections, with your form, the whaea atawhai and other forms.</i></p> <p><i>I really love that I am boarding with my friends and now call them my sisters.</i></p> <p><i>You form very close relationships and you become sisters, it's like one giant (sometimes not happy) family. That's what I love about it.</i></p> <p><i>I feel a bigger sense of belonging here than my last school.</i></p> <p><i>You start off as friends and friends turn into family, which gives you over 50 sisters.</i></p> <p><i>The hard thing about boarding is that you're so confined, when you want your own space sometimes it's hard to find.</i></p> <p><i>Although there may be difficulties and obstacles, I know I can rely on my form, my sisters to boost my happiness and mood.</i></p> <p><i>The hardest thing about boarding is finding where you fit in, not everyone is going to like you. You have to learn to deal with that because you live together. The school isn't very big so you can't hide from someone if you don't like them or if they don't like you.</i></p> <p><i>I don't like punishment as a form instead of as individuals.</i></p> <p><i>Socialising is very narrow.</i></p> <p><i>At first I was sick and tired of being in trouble because of other people playing up.</i></p> |
| <p>Always working hard toward goals with others pushing behind</p> <p>The journey of growth</p> | <p><i>The saying goes, work hard beats talent when talent doesn't work hard.</i></p> <p><i>My favourite teacher is Indian. She asks us to say karakia in English so she can understand but she understands and respects our tikanga. She pushes us to our best! She's firm and strict and always on task. My grandparents think she's a good teacher also.</i></p> <p><i>If you don't keep up with the work it becomes hard. We are always on the move.</i></p> <p><i>Commitment starts day one.</i></p> <p><i>I want to be a Māori doctor. My godfather has a PhD. He's always asking</i></p> |

| Theme | Textual Data from Student Journals |
|---|---|
| | <p><i>me how I can better myself at school.</i></p> <p><i>I guess what you do today affects what you do tomorrow.</i></p> <p><i>My science teacher goes the extra mile to help me, my score went from 28% to 80% which wouldn't have been possible without her.</i></p> <p><i>This school includes everyone and makes it feel more whānau based and welcoming.</i></p> <p><i>I like how manaakitanga is one of the key things at St Joseph's. Because boarding can be hard and it feels good to know we have someone there for us.</i></p> <p><i>I don't think I would do well at any other school.</i></p> <p><i>We are pushed to do things, kept focused.</i></p> <p><i>My science teacher is from overseas. She never gives up or stops helping. Miss Kingi forced me to take physics. I wasn't the brightest student, but my teacher believed I could do it</i></p> <p><i>I want to be a Māori marine biologist... I live next to the ocean. I have been through the Rena disaster, which polluted our oceans. I saw how important our land and ocean is to our culture.</i></p> <p><i>I love how we develop, grow, become creative and learn from/with each other.</i></p> |
| Disconnected from the world outside boarding school | <p><i>My mind explodes inside my head because there are so many things I question.</i></p> <p><i>I can focus on my work and education because there are no distractions, e.g. cell phones, drama...</i></p> <p><i>We are not allowed technology and to me it's a good break to be off social media for a while.</i></p> <p><i>It's amazing how much fun you can have without Facebook etc. We manage to spice it up a bit... we make our own fun.</i></p> <p><i>I don't like being restricted from the outside world. We are isolated. Only one walk to the park each weekend.</i></p> <p><i>I enjoy being in an environment that is solely focused on our education. It is a place where there is nothing else to focus on and a place of little distractions. If I were to leave I wouldn't stay focused and be given opportunities I am given here.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes I don't like how excluded we are from others. We have to stick to ourselves. I'd like to see new places and meet new people.</i></p> <p><i>We don't get enough freedom or leave.</i></p> <p><i>We design our fun in our own unique way. Creating a new vocabulary only</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Student Journals</i> |
|--|--|
| | <p><i>we can understand.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes not having Facebook is better, you don't have to hear about everything back home.</i></p> |
| <p>Being away from family and learning to be independent</p> | <p><i>The hardest part is being by yourself for once, learning how to be independent and unable to straightaway run home.</i></p> <p><i>I love the independence of learning how to do things for yourself. It prepares me mentally and physically for my future.</i></p> <p><i>I don't like being away from my family and that my only contact is one payphone. I think if there was more access to contact them I would find it better.</i></p> <p><i>The best parts of boarding include independence.</i></p> <p><i>I don't like being so far away from my family.</i></p> <p><i>It's just being so far from my family... at times I miss them so much.</i></p> <p><i>It's hard having hardly any time with our families while at boarding... leave to see family can be denied.</i></p> <p><i>Nothing can replace the way I miss my family and how I wish to be with them.</i></p> <p><i>At times, all I think about is being at home, but then I remember it was my choice to come and it is for the best that I stay here and finish off my schooling.</i></p> <p><i>If I'd had the choice I probably would have stayed close to home. But I'm glad I didn't. I never realised how much I needed to get away from home until I came here.</i></p> <p><i>I wouldn't want to go to school at home because it's a rural school that is very bad, and carries a bad reputation.</i></p> |
| <p>Boarding school is worth it in the end</p> | <p><i>You will make it to the end, and you love it.</i></p> <p><i>When I arrived, I didn't beg to go home. I was going to take the challenge of accomplishing this task, even if it meant sorrow and pain, I guess.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes I just wish I could go to a school in my hometown but I know this school is what's best for me.</i></p> <p><i>It's hard being away from people I love dearly but we have endless support here.</i></p> <p><i>My parents say I can come home anytime but I tell myself I have to suck it up and tell myself it is like a once in a lifetime opportunity.</i></p> <p><i>If I could tell myself one thing when I started boarding, it would be that you will definitely be challenged... but you'll be sweet as.</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Student Journals</i> |
|---|---|
| <p>Being a 'St Joe's girl' and the type of women the school produces</p> <p>The mana and history of the college</p> <p>Connection of the school with families</p> | <p><i>There was history in this school for me, there was things from this school I knew I would benefit from.</i></p> <p><i>I don't really know the reason my nanny and papa won't let me leave. I've had plenty of cries to them on the phone! I guess because this school's kind of a tradition and all my aunties have been here.</i></p> <p><i>The main reason I stay here is because I know that I am making my parents very proud and I wish to keep it that way.</i></p> <p><i>I was looking at other boarding schools but my dad recommended Māori boarding and this one was the one that appealed to my whole family the most.</i></p> <p><i>Here at St Joseph's we are expected to respect each other and act 'lady like' – at my last school everyone was rude to staff members.</i></p> <p><i>I have talked about leaving but my mum and dad think this school is better. Trust me, I have tried to leave, but it's just not an option.</i></p> <p><i>It's hard when you are upholding the standards of your school and keeping the mana of the school good and well.</i></p> <p><i>It makes my parents proud every time they see me wearing my uniform.</i></p> <p><i>Whanaungatanga here looks like the seniors and juniors working together on employments, cleaning the school. Helping whenever it's needed.</i></p> <p><i>I stay here because my mother wants me to finish college here.</i></p> <p><i>You see manaakitanga when the school sends girls out in the community to help cater for things and to support the kaupapa.</i></p> <p><i>This school has sort of helped me understand Māori living... I already had a good understanding 'cause I grew up with my nan who attended this school and taught me.</i></p> <p><i>At this school you learn about Māori tikanga and culture and how important it is.</i></p> <p><i>When our whānau and others tell us stories about when they were here... discipline. I believe it has gotten easier, yet we still find it hard.</i></p> <p><i>After leaving school I want to be a successful woman... or be here as staff when they need.</i></p> |
| <p>Rules, restrictions, timetables and being monitored</p> | <p><i>I dislike boarding because I don't have many privileges.</i></p> <p><i>I don't like not having access to the kitchen.</i></p> <p><i>I'm not being ungrateful, we are a school of Māori girls! We have big appetites! We need food to grow.</i></p> <p><i>We are even supervised on walks. We are never given space to ourselves which is a definite need sometimes.</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Student Journals</i> |
|--------------|--|
| | <p><i>At 6:55am we all do employments, that can be anything from washing windows, sweeping the driveway, or doing dishes.</i></p> <p><i>We have to be out by 7:45am. We are either to walk the (basketball) courts, or sit in the common room.</i></p> <p><i>At 3:10pm I go upstairs, shower, and iron for the next day.</i></p> <p><i>The best part is the routines and good habits that are drilled.</i></p> <p><i>If I could change things, we would have a fridge, it wouldn't be compulsory to go to meals and phones would be allowed.</i></p> <p><i>It just sucks waiting in a line at the payphone for our call home when we are on a timetable and your time on the payphone is limited.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes I don't like the rules... I feel like the whaea atawhai sometimes just make it up.</i></p> <p><i>It can be hard, being so organised.</i></p> |

Table 7: Themes from textual analysis, College C

Once the textual data had been themed, we started on the transcripts of the kōrero we had collected throughout the research so far. Again, the text was broken down and moved into existing themes. Students also looked for new themes as they analysed the transcripts. Table 8: Themes from transcript analysis, College C shows examples of this process.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Kōrero</i> |
|------------------------------|---|
| | <p><i>Attending a small tight-knit boarding school like ours, you become familiar with everyone around you. After five years with most of the girls in my form I feel like some of them know me better than I know myself... they see the things that I don't see myself doing and vice versa.</i></p> |
| Friends being like family | <p><i>Being here has taught me that everyone is different and that sometimes you just have to accept that.</i></p> <p><i>Reminiscing... makes me appreciate the journey that attending boarding school has been.</i></p> |
| Living together in community | <p><i>You might not like being living with everyone 'cause you have your dislikes and your troubles, and your arguments, but you just sort of learn to live with it.</i></p> <p><i>I chose to come here. I saw pictures... I thought it looked fun. Like they were having fun. It looked exciting... There were pictures of people at a park smiling. It was different when I got here, hard to make friends. But it got easier. It's good now.</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Kōrero</i> |
|---|---|
| <p>Always working hard, toward goals, with others pushing behind</p> <p>The journey of growth</p> | <p><i>Yeah, here, teachers care about us... as Māori. They know tikanga. Even the Pākehā teachers, it doesn't matter. They all teach us the same way, and you can tell that it's not just a job for them. They put in extra effort and they care about us. They believe in us. It makes you want to work hard and try your best.</i></p> <p><i>A lot of the time here at school everything seems to blur together. While here time flies by so quickly and now that I'm almost at the end it doesn't seem like I've spent five years of my life here... at times it's only the blossoming or the bareness of this tree that reminds me of how much time has passed since the start of the term or year.</i></p> <p><i>We, here... I know that if we have a goal, we really try our best to achieve it. I wanted to show reaching for her goals, and she's nearly there.</i></p> <p><i>The pattern, the koru and stuff in it represents a girl who's not quite... there. Still growing. That's why I took a photo of it, because we're not really... well, we are woman, but we're still growing. It's unfinished.</i></p> <p><i>At other schools they would probably just look at Māori girls, you know, the ones with a bit of attitude or the ones who aren't the smartest and probably just not even push them, think they aren't worth the effort 'cause they are probably dumb. But not here, everyone is told they can do it and everyone can do it.</i></p> <p><i>People think it's Miss that makes this school. But it's also the school board. And the whānau whanui. It's people behind the scenes, all pitching in doing work for Miss too. People forget that. Heaps of Māori schools don't have Miss, but they also don't have those who help behind the scenes.</i></p> |
| <p>Disconnected from the world outside boarding school</p> | <p><i>We're in our own little world and we don't know what's going on outside in the 'real world'. As a junior I thought that after attending Hato Hōhepa I would have no idea how to handle life outside after being isolated, in a sense.</i></p> <p><i>I've been like, pulled away from the outside world, coming here.</i></p> <p><i>Having no phones here makes it easier to concentrate and form connections with people. I don't even really miss having a phone or internet. When I go home now I use it less. It's not really a problem. I have friends here at school. I don't miss home too much.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes I feel out of the loop at home, but... I still... still feel the same at home.</i></p> <p><i>I don't mind not having my phone. I don't need it much. If I need to call home I can go to the office.</i></p> <p><i>I can't get out there, I feel like I want to, but I can't. It's like when I really want to get out, and do different activities and stuff but I'm stuck... at school.</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Kōrero</i> |
|---|--|
| | <p><i>One thing I've noticed is that when I go home, I'm always the first to finish my dinner. Because being at boarding, they are always like, 'Come on, you gotta get...' So I eat my dinner in, like... five minutes sometimes! Mum's like, 'Calm down! It's not going anywhere...'</i></p> <p><i>They want to take their girls home too, dads and mums. I guess it's harder to say, 'Yes, come home,' in a letter. I think it's a good thing we had that, no phone call home for six weeks at the start.</i></p> |
| <p>Being away from family</p> <p>Learning to be independent</p> | <p><i>It's just the worst thing, getting kicked off the phone when they say, 'You have to go now,' and you're not ready, and you're crying.</i></p> <p><i>I ran from here once, three years ago, for three days. I went home. But I was, like, thinking about all the things boarding school, this school, gives me. And then I realised I had to come back.</i></p> <p><i>I knew about it here because some of my whānau come to this school before. My mum and my aunts came here... Miss knows everyone and our whānau too. It's like a family.</i></p> <p><i>I would hate it if I had to go to the school back home. It's terrible. It's Māori, but it's not. What I mean is it's all Māori that go there but it's government school.</i></p> <p><i>Although you may not like being away from home sometimes, you embrace it.</i></p> <p><i>I was kind of scared to think when I was younger, like I didn't want to be by myself, but now I'm more independent and can do that kind of stuff.</i></p> <p><i>The decisions and the choices we make reflect us. I am who I am, and the decisions I make I have to live with.</i></p> <p><i>Employments... it teaches you how to do it yourself.</i></p> <p><i>When I first moved here I was homesick. I missed my whānau. We aren't allowed to call home for six weeks when we start because it's too easy to try to go home before we have even settled in. It's also the parents. Not the mums, the dads!</i></p> <p><i>I feel like going away actually helped me stand on my own two feet, away from whānau. At home with whānau always around, it was difficult to know who I am. But coming here I found my own self and that's a good thing.</i></p> |
| <p>Boarding school is worth it in the end</p> | <p><i>...the fact there are ups and downs about schooling here. Being away from home, the strict rules, the drama and then there's the lifelong friendships and the academic success... as you keep going, keep pushing through the what can be hard years at boarding school, as you keep climbing the stairs, the bright side is come more into view.</i></p> <p><i>Miss Kingi will say stuff like, 'know your place!' As juniors, you have to</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Kōrero</i> |
|---|--|
| | <p><i>work your way there. But you actually end up being there. We made it. By the time you are at senior level, you look at the juniors and think, 'We used to be like that.'</i></p> <p><i>We'll get there eventually, a light at the end of the tunnel. Pretty much. You'll get there. But, you have to go through heaps of stuff.</i></p> <p><i>After running away and coming back... I am so glad I came back and I would do it all again to be here, where I am.</i></p> |
| <p>Being a 'St Joe's girl' and the type of women the school produces</p> <p>The mana and history of the college</p> | <p><i>...cleaning, that we do here at school, mostly the morning employments which I think contributes largely to the sense of whānau and whanaungatanga felt here at school.</i></p> <p><i>More than this... What is significant about the way we do employments is that we do them. We don't have anyone cleaning up after us, we do it for ourselves, and for the school.</i></p> <p><i>It's the feeling that we are all part of the St Joe's community now, and when you leave the school. Once a Joe's girl, always a Joe's girl.</i></p> <p><i>It's a good school. You have to be really good because one bad thing in uniform would spread like wildfire. Like Miss says, we have to protect the school. It's got a good name.</i></p> <p><i>It's kind of like, we come to this school so we have to hold up the values of this place. Mana wāhine. They came here, way back.</i></p> <p><i>We are here to learn our tikanga and to grow as young ladies, we're also here to do the mahi and to study.</i></p> <p><i>It's lots of other people who've come through, kind of like a legacy.</i></p> <p><i>A lot of teachers here aren't Māori. But they still know tikanga. I think they probably have to, to teach here. Miss would make sure of that. They must just learn it as they go along here. Because everything we learn is Māori. Not in language or about Māori things, just the way it is done.</i></p> |
| <p>Rules, restrictions and being monitored</p> | <p><i>A lack of control – you know, you're not able to decide whether you turn on the light or not... being a junior living in shared dorms and having a set lights out time. It didn't matter whether or not you were ready or not for the light to be turned off. It was lights out time and the lights were going out.</i></p> <p><i>You might not like the rules that we follow, but you end up doing the same.</i></p> <p><i>The set of rules that we all live by while here at school... We all live by the same rules, we're all the same and at the end of the day the rules are there for our own safety... after a while they kind of just fade in to the background, a part of everyday life as we get on with it.</i></p> <p><i>It isn't only the students who have formal roles at school who are always under the spotlight, at times it feels like we all are. When you put on a St</i></p> |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Textual Data from Kōrero</i> |
|--------------|--|
| | <p><i>Joseph's uniform there will always be someone with an eagle's eye watching you, ready to report back to Miss Kingi if they spot any slight misbehaviour.</i></p> <p><i>...represents the order and consistency. Like everything else done here at school, the daily employments contribute to the bigger picture of order and cleanliness.</i></p> <p><i>I think the worst part is the early mornings and how strict it was to begin with. But I'm used to it now.</i></p> <p><i>Every morning we wake up and say a karakia, and before we go to bed, and before every single meal, and every single class.</i></p> <p><i>The timetable. Everything is really set to the timetable, even just a little bit of a change is like, 'What's... what's... but it's not half past!'</i></p> <p><i>Behave 'cause someone who could catch you out is coming round the corner.</i></p> <p><i>The Whaea Atawhai were really hard to get used to. They would be on your case so hard about everything when we started. Things you didn't even know you were doing wrong they would be growling you about. But it gets better. Eventually you brush it off and you get used to it. Some of them growl you and you just ignore it and get on with it.</i></p> |

Table 8: Themes from transcript analysis, College C

College C students described boarding school as a difficult experience; however, this challenge was seen as part of a broader journey that led toward a brighter future. Some students felt boarding school separated them from home and the outside world. Key themes that emerged from the data were sisterhood and the sense of family the boarding students of College C shared as a collective, and as a broader part of the College C story. The school was seen as being steeped in history – and that history was grounded on producing strong, successful Māori women. The data revealed that attending boarding school changed the way students at College C thought about themselves and their futures. The data showed that remaining at home to attend local schools or non-Māori schools was seen as unappealing for reasons of lack of opportunity, racism and socio-economic status the school had within the community. The major themes that emerged through the student analysis are seen in the following box:

Being away from family
 Learning to be independent
 The mana and history of the college
 Boarding school is worth it in the end
 Being a 'St Joe's girl' and the type of women the school produces
 Rules, restrictions and being monitored

After the student analysis, I revisited the two datasets (text and images) alone and looked for patterns, repetition of symbols, lighting, colour, themes and so on. Although not noted by the students as major themes in their data, Māori education and culture, as well as Catholic faith, also appeared frequently throughout the images and textual data. The reason these did not feature in the student analysis is unclear, although I infer that this may be because the Māoritanga and Catholic faith of the school are considered part of the boarding school experience at College C to such an extent that they were incorporated into the idea of 'boarding school'. As such, when the students were describing what it was like for them to attend boarding school, they may have been reflecting on what it was like to experience these aspects, rather than seeing them as things to discuss in their images. Mahi (work, or effort) as a theme emerged regularly from the data, and this was linked to growth as individuals toward success. Another College C motto is *I o mahi katoa mahia*, which is spoken in English as: *in whatever you do, do well (excel)*.

The student analysis showed that College C as a boarding school had high standards, expectations and a very firm timetable (as well as high levels of supervision and restriction). Boarding school, even with these firm guidelines, was seen by students as preferable to the local schools at home, and understood to lead to a bright future by developing them into the type of Māori women they knew College C had produced for decades. Deeper emotions were not a part of the process at College C, with students speaking at a surface level about their observations, but not so much about how they felt about boarding school. This is one limitation of the research, which is most probably due to the relatively short amount of time I spent at College C, and possibly due to my cultural background being different to that of the students at College C. If the study had been continued for a longer period, I would have revisited the images with the girls and, through further kōrero, worked on trying to draw out some of the deeper emotions that may have been reflected in the images.

Finishing the kete

With the data analysis complete, the 10 participants at College C selected images that best represented their overall themes, which would form an exhibition to be held after I returned to Australia, when it would fit into the school calendar. This exhibition, aimed at the students' chosen audience, the school's whānau whanui, was a way for students to share their ideas with the school community. A newsletter article was also written by one of the students to share the findings of the students, outlining their experiences as researchers as well as their results. The results were shared with the school board, who expressed their happiness at being able to share in and understand the voices of the students, as well as their surprise at the level of conversation in the research. Miss Kingi was thrilled to hear student voices through the results of the research at College C, and the 10 students involved expressed both joy at being involved in research and ambitions to continue researching in the future. The stories shared so far in this work however, rely on the listener to appreciate the 'deeper relatedness to the research Stories so that they make sense....images, imaging and experiences...synchronicity becomes important to interpreting and translating the research stories (Martin 2008, p. 97).

CHAPTER 7

Findings, successes and limitations

This chapter is a discussion of the findings from research conducted at Colleges A, B and C, comparing and contrasting the themes students identified in their data across each of the three sites. It will examine the effectiveness of photoyarn and kōreropikitia, while describing the successes and limitations of the research. This chapter also shares my understanding of what students expressed about their Indigenous boarding school experiences throughout this research journey and as such, also contains my personal reflections on my own learnings as an Aboriginal researcher working with Indigenous students in this study.

Researching alongside students in ways that respected our relatedness as Indigenous people (Martin 2003) included developing an Indigenous method that encouraged the voice of Indigenous boarders to be at the centre of all parts of the research. My identity as an Aboriginal woman has certainly influenced this research. My connectedness to the participants at Colleges A and B (through shared cultural identity) and at College C (through shared indigeneity) may have provided me with deeper access and insights than a non-Indigenous researcher. Such connections are described as giving greater depth to the data collected (Dwyer & Buckle 2009), and a greater sense of accuracy when researching through student responses (Hockey 1993). I acknowledge that my connectedness to this research also presented moments of difficulty. Asselin (2003) among others argues that personal connections can hinder objective collection and analysis of data in research. While I agree that my own

perceptions and understandings, viewed through my experiences as an Aboriginal educator who has worked in boarding schools with Aboriginal girls, influenced my analysis of the data produced and gathered by the students in this research, I argue this was one of the great strengths of this work. Many times at each of the three boarding schools, I saw or heard things I had previously seen or heard in boarding contexts, and I had to remind myself that this research was not about my own perceptions as much as it was about student perceptions of their own experiences. It was my role to ensure that student voices could be heard. Students being involved throughout all aspects of the research, from data collection to analysis, balanced my influence and encouraged student voice to remain centred. Deeply connected to this work, I experienced strong emotions, new ways of thinking, feelings, spiritual connections and fresh personal understandings about myself as a person, and as a researcher.

As an Aboriginal researcher, I understand the importance of community involvement in research, beyond just the young people who were the participants. In light of this, as I completed this research and wrote this thesis I continued my personal conversations with elders involved in Indigenous education Australia-wide, to discuss the method, findings and themes that emerged. A limitation of my research was that I was unable to organise a welcome to country by traditional owners or elders at each site. At College A, an acknowledgement of country was delivered by the Indigenous support officer, and I gave an acknowledgement of country at College B in our opening yarn. For College C, my meetings with kaumatua, as well as a pōwhiri (welcome ceremony) on my first day, were complemented by regular discussions with kuia throughout all of my visits. These processes ensured guidance by tangata whenua, especially vital for me as manuhiri.

I am aware that the student data and research processes at each site would have been different with elders present and participating in the yarns. Depending on the connections, and who the elders were to each of the participants, this could have led to closed conversations, with the students being more reserved about what they yarned, or, more open discussions, with the safety and security of an elder enabling deeper conversation. Students at Colleges A and B came from many different communities, and neither of the boarding schools had a College elder. Mirri, College A's Indigenous support officer, did join many of our research sessions, and her presence increased the participation of College A students in the early sessions, before

I had formed trusting relationships with them. In addressing the lack of elders in our yarns, I took time to discuss this research with elders from the country that Colleges A and B sit on. These guiding conversations were, for me, vital to ensure the safety of my approach. My presence as an outsider may have affected the students' decisions to be part of the research, as well as the ways they participated in the research. As they did not know me prior to our research, the power imbalance present when an adult begins working with an adolescent may have affected the data collection until our relationships were given time to form and develop.

The individual boarding schools within this study affected the outcomes of this research. In the initial stages, schools invited to be a part of this project were girls' boarding schools in urban areas of Australia that had more than five Indigenous boarders. With only two Australian boarding schools agreeing to participate in this study, and one invitation to a boarding school in Aotearoa New Zealand, it was vital to first allow the students as research communities within individual schools to first draw the themes from their data. Only then, as researcher, could I analyse the three schools together, to maintain the connectedness of the participants and the very unique identity and community of each boarding school. Underpinned by relatedness theory (Martin, 2003), the core of this work rests on an understanding that all aspects interconnect, and that every aspect of this research impacted on the others. I draw out threads from this complex tapestry to discuss the findings students had about their own experiences, as well as my own observations which are no more valid than those of the students themselves. First, the limitations of this study are considered.

A limitation of this study was the time restraints my presence as a visitor had on the process as a whole. Although our relationships formed over the first few sessions, and we had formed strong bonds by the completion of the study, the initial sessions were conducted when I was a virtual stranger to the students at each site. Meeting me cold and starting the research after students had met me just once was potentially limiting to the data gathered during the early stages of the photoyarn process. I recognise that researching on campus within the boarding schools in this study placed constraints on my capacity to promote equal research relationships. The school environment might have represented a limitation, in that it may have caused students to assign power to my position as an adult, preventing a truly equal relationship from their point of view. I used a variety of techniques to overcome this,

including referring to myself as Jessa rather than Ms Rogers; engaging with students (as part of their collective, rather than socialising with the staff) at all times when onsite; wearing casual clothes rather than business wear; and sitting on the floor for many of our sessions. Eating together also enabled conversational yarning to flow, a process described in Chapter 2, allowing us to build relationships. A key to the success of this research was a focus on empowering student participants, by giving them control of gathering and analysing data. The photography in particular was completely student-led, such processes allowing power to be shared equally between the students and myself.

This study had a relatively small number of student participants, all of whom were from rural, regional or urban areas. This did present some limitations to the applicability of the experiences expressed by the Indigenous Australian students as did the number of school sites included in this study presented limitations. I believe the inclusion of an Aotearoa New Zealand school assisted in broadening the scope, as well as in contextualising the experiences shared by the students at Australian boarding schools. The inclusion of a boarding school in a regional or remote area may have given different results and insights. The fact that many of the students in this study spoke Standard Australian English or Aboriginal Australian English as their first language may have impacted the results of this study. If the method had been used with students for whom a traditional Aboriginal language was their first language, the results, and the process, would most probably have been different, and student images in particular might have been used differently. The potential of the new research method photoyarn as a way of researching with Indigenous students more broadly is not yet known. Photoyarn/kōreropikitia represents one of the key contributions of this research. This final chapter discusses the method in its infancy, acknowledging that its full potential as a new method is not yet able to be fully seen.

What is needed for student voices to be heard is ‘a fundamental shift in the dominant epistemology in our society and our schools to one based on trusting, listening to, and respecting the minds of all participants in schooling’ (Oldfather et al. 1999, p. 313). I created photoyarn to amplify the voices of Indigenous girls attending boarding schools. Photoyarn led to, as described by Oldfather et al. (1999), a listening and respecting of the voices of participants of schooling, and in this case, those student voices were those of Indigenous girls attending boarding schools. The

development of photoyarn, underpinned by relatedness theory, and employed in ways informed by Indigenous research principles, enabled me to work effectively as a researcher with students at Colleges A, B and C. Listening to the voices of students in this research required trust, respect and the forming of relationships. I was there to listen, and the research outcomes showed a variety of themes and voices that will be discussed later in this chapter. As Cook-Sather (2006) explains:

If students speak, adults must listen... anti-racist pedagogies emphasize the importance of listening, arguing that teachers can improve their practice by listening closely to what students have to say about their learning... and that listening to students can counter discriminatory and exclusionary tendencies in education (p. 10); acknowledging that what you don't know is much bigger than what you know... the notion that the project of school is an ongoing negotiation rather than transmission... the idea that education is a process based on rights and relationship... that education is about change (p. 28).

When I began this research, little to no literature existed on Indigenous girls' views about boarding school. With no direct student voices available through research on boarding school available to educators, school leaders, my research sits within a considerable gap. Developing a method that allowed student voices to be centred was the impetus for photoyarn and its modification, *kōreropikitia*. Earlier chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) outlined the process of development related to each school site. This chapter aims to look at the method in relation to its successes, strengths and weaknesses.

Conducting the research onsite at Colleges A, B and C presented challenges. Using photoyarn in a school setting meant dealing with large numbers of students in restricted time periods, both due to the nature of school timetables and my inability to conduct a lengthy period of fieldwork in each school. Financial restrictions on fieldwork funds, the business of learning in the boarding schools as well as my own personal and work commitments all placed restrictions on the time I could spend with the students overall. Our research spaces were formal spaces such as classrooms, boardrooms and small offices. Management of student consent procedures, working within school timetables, and recording conversations in noisy school environments all presented difficulties. I worked to minimise these challenges by working in the boarding house after school, using student spaces including dining halls to hold group yarns, yarning with students in areas that were away from loud noise, and attempting

to block enough time for individual yarns at College A in order for students to feel heard – however, such challenges still present as limitations of this research.

Because we were on campus, the photoyarn process was restricted by students' inability to take images of faces (on school grounds). This was not much discussed a great deal by students, and they did not appear to consider this a major issue. Student photography gave the participants power to voice their own messages, and the greatest power of yarning in this research was its ability to draw out the messages of student images, giving students the chance to discuss ideas they could not capture through photos. While photographing faces might have allowed stronger emotions to be explored by students through their images, this restriction appeared to increase their use of symbolism and creativity in visually describing how they experienced boarding school. Many students used colour, shape, light and shade, as well as symbols, to present their ideas visually. If the study had been held off campus, the results may have been different. The yarns and *kōrero* at school were also reflected in the images students took during school holidays, and the journal entries that College C students completed at home in the holidays. This showed that, while my presence as a researcher was restricted to the boarding school environment, students expressed similar themes in their data whether it was produced on or off campus, and whether I was present or not.

The length of the fieldwork conducted at each college presented limitations to this research, and to the effectiveness of photoyarn as a method. Because of the nature of research in schools, I did not have the chance to form relationships with the students involved as deeply as I could have over a longer period of time. I believe this may have prevented the research from eliciting students' deeper emotions. While the photoyarn and *kōreropikitia* processes were completed once at each site, this process may have gleaned deeper reflections had the process been cycled, the second time discussing the emotions that lay under the experiences students shared through their images and words. Wright and Morphy (2000) state that visual arts are indeed to many Indigenous people 'a vehicle to express complex emotions and experiences that do not lend themselves to being expressed in other ways' (p. 44). Maybe this is the answer, in part, to why some complex emotions were not discussed during the yarns. Perhaps participants in this study felt they had expressed their deeper emotions or their states of thinking in their images, and they did not feel these also had to be expressed

verbally. The yarns, while an important part of the process, would not, I believe, have been as rich without the photographic element of the photoyarn method. Atkinson (2000) states that in using yarning circles and storytelling in her research with Indigenous Australians, the process of 'reclaiming lives' mirrors the process of 'reclaiming stories'.

While some might consider the small number of students a limitation, I believe that it resulted in a truthful analysis centred wholly on grasping what the 35 individual Indigenous voices could tell us about their boarding school experiences. If this study had included more participants, the depth of inquiry into the individual images and voices would not have allowed these voices to be truly centred. In an Indigenous context, group consensus is more important than one or two voices; and this might pose a challenge for other researchers who intend to use photoyarn as a method, particularly non-Indigenous researchers or those unfamiliar with yarning circles and community decision-making processes. For use with non-Indigenous students, this part of the method may need adapting. Photoyarn as a method has great potential to grow and expand, according to the participants and researchers who use it in different contexts.

Across the three school sites in this research, diverse groups of students made up of unique Indigenous young women came together through this work. Participants at the beginning of this process were connected by shared indigeneity, womanhood and boarding school experiences. By the end of the process, at each site in this study, the participants realised they actually had many more connections and shared experiences. While I could outline the many differences that each individual had, these made little difference to the outcome, and by each of my third visits there was definitely a sense of community in each of the school research groups. As such, differences fell away, and it was an empowering and positive experience to see the bonds among students strengthened through our collaborative research. The photoyarn method was built on the idea that the collective opinion was of greater importance than individual voices (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care 2012). Yarning circles enabled community voices to be strengthened while also giving space to individual voices.

There are many ways to analyse the data gathered through photoyarn, in addition to the process outlined in this thesis. The images, for example, could be

analysed in greater depth or independently by the researcher, as could the transcripts of the discussions. If used with less academic students, for example, or if there was a language barrier between researcher and participants, the images might become much more important, or, if participants were not prepared to speak as openly as those in this research. The method may in fact be more suited to sophisticated and articulate participants than those who cannot engage in the analysis to a point where the results truly are student-led (rather than researcher-interpreted). An equal relationship between the researcher and the participants is key in photoyarn. The strength of the method lies in the understanding that the researcher is equal to those participating in the research, and that the participants lead the process on a topic on which they want to speak. Stories are important aspects of the research process when working in the space of Indigenous peoples, and stories can be told verbally but also visually, through art such as photography. The combination of photographs and yarns worked successfully with the students in this study, as seen by the major themes that emerged through photoyarn/kōreropikitia across the three sites.

The use of photoyarn at the two Australian sites (Colleges A and B) and its modified version kōreropikitia in Aotearoa New Zealand at College C saw a series of major themes within individual school data, and then, across all three schools. Some data (especially visual data) appeared to be almost identical across the three schools in separate locations. Given the students were limited to school grounds, they might have been expected to produce common school-themed motifs, such as school bells, desks, hallways and so on. This is not an explanation, though, for the meanings behind the images, which appeared in student yarns. These yarns solidified the understanding that there are indeed some boarding experiences that are similar for Indigenous girls, whether they board with non-Indigenous or Indigenous students, in Australia or in Aotearoa New Zealand. There are also some key differences, which will be discussed. A small selection of textual and visual data that emerged across all three sites is given in tables below to enable the reader to reflect on my researcher analysis provided in this chapter.

The importance of cultural understanding and education

College A



It's like, they are happy to get us up in paint to dance for show, but they don't see our culture as meaningful for learning.

Last year, we all used to sit together, us Koori girls in year 8, 9 and 10 in a big group. We were all sitting under the undercroft for lunch and a year 12 girl goes, 'there's so many Black girls here, so many Abos.' We were like, 'are you serious?' We complained to our old boarding mistress, but she did nothing.

We never hear about Aboriginal things in class. I can only remember once in the four years I've been here. They showed a video and it was about Aboriginal people in the city. One of the white girls goes, 'how come they're wearing clothes?'

Being an Indigenous girl at this school, you feel like you stand out. You can't really express your culture or nothing. I get up and talk about it, 'cause teachers ask me but girls don't want to listen.

College B



We only study Aboriginal stuff in history, but sometimes they cut that bit out. We are learning about early settlers and our teacher has only brought up Aboriginal stuff because I've intervened.

In English, they study Indigenous poems, but it's a unit and I've not heard of any classes doing that unit since. My three years here, English is the only time I'd learned anything focused on Indigenous people. I feel like when I go back home I'm speaking differently and I'm less Aboriginal in a way. In my mind there's like a switch mode... you change the way you speak depending on where you are and who you're with and that.

When I go home I feel like I've changed. The friendships you had before, when you start hanging out with new people they just bag you out saying, 'Oh you're white now!' You change the way you speak, all proper now and that... you just get bagged out for the smallest things, clothes and everything. I wouldn't have thought I'd changed, until someone pointed it out in a bad way. Now I'm really self-conscious when I go into community and I wonder, 'Am I really recognised as one of them? Am I seen differently?'

College C



A lot of teachers here aren't Māori. But they still know tikanga. I think they probably have to, to teach here. Miss (the principal) would make sure of that. They must just learn it as they go along here. Because everything we learn is Māori. Not in language or about Māori things, just the way it is done.

Whanaungatanga here looks like the seniors and juniors working together on employments, cleaning the school. Helping whenever it's needed.

This school has sort of helped me understand Māori living... I already had a good understanding 'cause I grew up with my nan who attended this school and taught me.

At this school you learn about Māori tikanga and culture and how important it is.

Table 9: Themes that emerged across all three sites: *The importance of cultural understanding and education*

Boarding school forming deep friendships between Indigenous sisters, like a family

College A



Friends is the best part [about boarding school]. They become a little family to you, living with your friend. It's like a family away from home.

I came to boarding school last year, and when I first came I was so nervous. But as soon as I walked through the door, these two Black girls started walking towards me, me and my mum, and started welcoming themselves. And then I was really nervous, when I went to my room, but then this girl, another Aboriginal girl... she invited me in her room and I remember we became like best friends in the first two minutes. We were sitting on the bed talking away and it was like I'd known her forever. And the Indigenous girls at this school I can't thank enough 'cause we're like family, it's really good.

It's kind of like having another family, like a second family, you get to live with your friends and meet new people from different areas.

College B



I took a picture of these succulents. They look like a little community. We're from different paths. Um, roots, different roots and backgrounds, but we're all coming together becoming a community in the boarding house.

We are all gonna go through that stage when we feel all alone. And we kinda have to be there for each other when we go through that stage.

How we work together through hard times just kind of prevails 'cause we help each other.

College C



This is friendship, sisters. Walking the journey together.

And that's like being at boarding school, it's more than just being at this boarding school, the Māori boarding schools have a kinship, it's a tight-knit community. And everyone knows everyone! And like, 'oh, is that what that person looks like...' [Laughter.]

I really love that I am boarding with my friends and now call them my sisters.

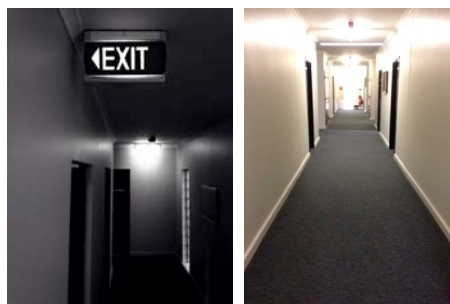
You form very close relationships and you become sisters, it's like one giant (sometimes not happy) family. That's what I love about it.

Attending a small tight-knit boarding school like ours, you become familiar with everyone around you. After five years with most of the girls in my form, I feel like some of them know me better than I know myself.

Table 10: Themes that emerged across all three sites: Boarding school forming deep friendships between Indigenous sisters, like a family

Boarding school being worth it in the end, or a pathway to a brighter future

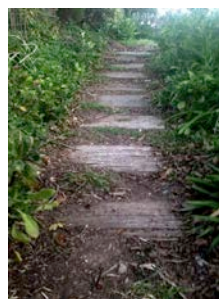
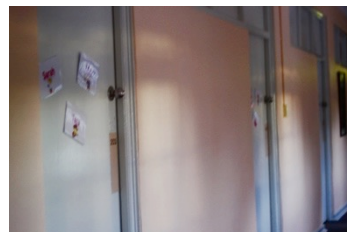
College A



Come to boarding school, I couldn't have been more excited. I lived in a little town... a hole. I couldn't be more excited to get out of there, come to big smoke... to get an education.

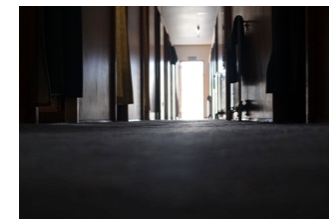
When I was in year 7, I actually was excited about going... only 'cause I lived in a place where there was no high school whatsoever. There was only 15 kids in the school, 10 Black (which we were all related), and five white farmer's kids. So, my older cousins, they went to boarding school, so did my uncles and aunties.

College B



It's a rocky road, but when you get beyond it's smooth, and never ends. School is like that, assignments and stress, but once you are into life you will settle down and the path will be nice and easy.

College C



Being away from home, the strict rules, the drama and then there's the lifelong friendships and the academic success... as you keep going, keep pushing through the what can be hard years at boarding school, as you keep climbing the stairs, the bright side is come more into view.

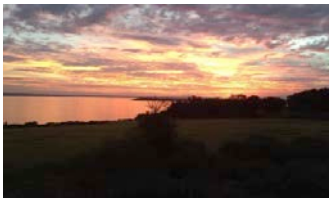
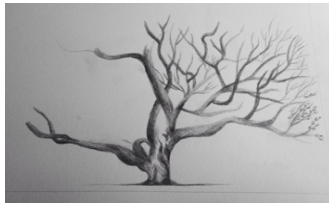
If I'd had the choice I probably would have stayed close to home. But I'm glad I didn't. I never realised how much I needed to get away from home until I came here.

When I arrived, I didn't beg to go home. I was going to take the challenge of accomplishing this task, even if it meant sorrow and pain, I guess.

Table 11: Themes that emerged across all three sites: *Boarding school being worth it in the end, or a pathway to a brighter future*

Growth, new opportunities, the beginning of a new life

College A

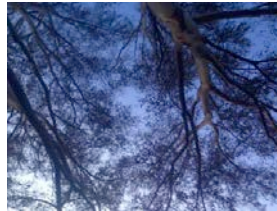


The opportunities here, where I come from I wouldn't get the opportunities I get here, I live in a small town.

The best thing about boarding is getting a really good quality education. It's like a new experience in life, and you meet new people. You build experiences with people who wouldn't associate with outside.

Sometimes I look out my window at boarding and think how different it is and nothing like country at home. Then I miss family... but I also see the lights of the city and remember the opportunity here.

College B



Don't worry about where you come from or difficulties in the past, boarding will make you strong and lead you to a path you're destined for. You see this photo and you look through the gap and there's the calmness of the bushes and the freedom outside.

College C



I enjoy being in an environment that is solely focused on our education. It is a place where there is nothing else to focus on and a place of little distractions. If I were to leave I wouldn't stay focused and be given opportunities I am given here.

My parents say I can come home anytime but I tell myself I have to suck it up and tell myself it is, like, a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Table 12: Themes that emerged across all three sites: *Growth, new opportunities, the beginning of a new life*

Restrictions, feeling trapped, isolated, stuck in the middle

College A



Because how Aboriginal people cope with death is different, when my big cousin passed away I took... I think it was three weeks off first. They were ringing up my mum every single day – they wouldn't let us mourn for him, and then I come back and I was real emotional, I didn't want to go to school or nothing but they forced me, then my mum was like, 'Nup, they're not going to school, they're not mentally right,' but then they just got funny with us. We did come back, my sister and I, about one month later, and they just act all funny with us. Act like we done something wrong, and then they don't support us. Then they wouldn't let us go to the funeral. We had to get all the money and that, that took a month. And then they wasn't gonna let us go because it might affect our education. Mum was like, 'No, that's her big brother, who do you think you are?'

Not being able to leave. No freedom.

Yeah, no freedom.

The environment. Like... the bars on the windows make us feel like prisoners.

You can't win, because if you go home for culture, you will be missing school, which is hard to catch up. They also keep calling Mum and not respecting our cultural business. That makes Mum angry then she hates on school. Then when you come back, school seems angry at you, and keep asking where you were and why you were away so long.

College B



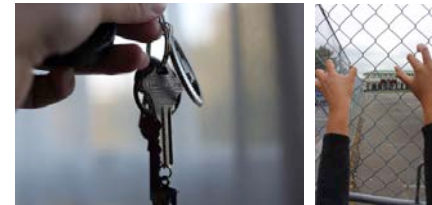
This is a house, not a home. It's a house. I saved it as asylum in my phone contact list! [Laughter.]

Why is there bars on the windows? It feels like jail.

Racism here, it's not a major thing but it's here and you can't really escape it.

How you feel when you are going through a rough time at boarding, when family members have died and stuff. When you could go home but you've made the decision to stay and not fall behind and so you have to carry on like you're ok, even though you're not. It feels like you are letting part of your cultural identity go when you do stuff like that, before I started this term, and my great-grandmother just passed away just before I had to leave [home to come back to school for term]. And Mum was like, 'You can stay back if you want but it will take about three weeks.' But I was in senior production and I had rehearsals, and my report card wasn't that great last semester. So I made the decision to go back. And everyone understood perfectly but I felt really bad about it. I was on plane, 'What if I keep making these decisions?' Not participating in culture and that. It probably won't be a part of me anymore.

College C



It's hard knowing you are being watched. It's like that always coming here, everyone knowing you are a St Joe's girl. And always being watched at school... it's not easy.

Sometimes I don't like how excluded we are from others. We have to stick to ourselves. I'd like to see new places and meet new people.

I don't like being restricted from the outside world. We are isolated. Only one walk to the park each weekend.

It's hard having hardly any time with our families while at boarding... leave to see family can be denied.

I can't get out there, I feel like I want to, but I can't. It's like when I really want to get out, and do different activities and stuff but I'm stuck... at school.

We're in our own little world and we don't know what's going on outside in the real world.

Table 13: Themes that emerged across all three sites: *Restrictions, feeling trapped, isolated, stuck in the middle*

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Boarding school restrictions described by students included daily repetitiveness of activities (bell times, employments, class, study, eating, showering, bed). Many students could recite their timetables. Students at College C joked about experiencing anxiety when unexpected changes occurred to the timetable. Feelings of being trapped at times and having little freedom were discussed across all three sites, often in contrast (but not always) to the freedom students were given at home. At College A and College C the lack of alone or free time in the schedule was spoken of, and students were open about the challenges of living in tight spaces with many young women. For students at College C this was seen as a community-building exercise overall, but at College A students found communal living difficult, mostly due to cultural differences with non-Indigenous students. While students at all sites often brought up rules and restrictions as the worst part of the boarding experience, the data analysis showed that Indigenous students viewed their boarding school experiences as being worth it in order to achieve their goals.

The concept of working hard toward goals was strengthened by the history of College C as an academically focused school. College C, grounded on strict discipline, has always had powerful women leaders at the helm, pushing Māori boarders to work hard, achieve their best and go on to make change in the world and their communities. Students at College C spoke fondly and with thankfulness of the support of whānau, staff, previous students of the school and the broader community. It was clear that students at College C believed boarding school was preparing them for their lives after school, lives that would be enriched because of the school they attended. Students voiced their beliefs that not only would their work and boarding school journey be ‘worth it in the end’, but also that the preparation they receive through boarding school would benefit them as well as their whānau. Through kotahitanga, Māori have ‘learnt to conduct their lives within certain inherited guidelines. These guidelines did not limit options but were used as lessons... the past was there to learn from... looking to the past at what their ancestors did and how they responded’ (Hemara 2000, p. 72). Not only were the girls I worked with at College C acutely aware of the history and mana of the school, almost all students had an ancestor or relative who attended the college (along with other prominent female Māori leaders). This knowledge gave current students a clear outline of the standards that are expected of them, as well as the potential outcomes they can expect for themselves, such as success or even

greatness. College C students saw their family's mana as being at stake if they did not work hard, and they talked openly about being in the spotlight or being watched to make sure they are doing the right thing. Students at College C showed awareness of the fact that in Māori communities the loss of mana has 'negative ramifications for the entire whānau, hapū and iwi...' (Hemara 2000, p. 70). Students at Colleges B and C also talked of working hard toward their goals, also drawing on their ancestors and the past for guidance. Across College A and College B, students drew on the pain of colonisation and assimilation, working to achieve their best not only for themselves but also on behalf of Aboriginal people. When viewed through this lens, the boarding school journey is seen as being worth the struggle, with the light at the end of the tunnel represented by success – this is what a good education represents for Indigenous students, their families and their communities. Boarding school, in this way, was seen as a step up, as opening doors, and as an exit from hardship for some students.

Students at Colleges B and C felt boarding school had changed them in many ways, including the relationships they had with friends, family and community. One student noted that she would not have thought she had changed until someone pointed it out as a negative, and that she felt self-conscious in community. Since she had started boarding, she had asked, 'Am I seen differently?' Another noted that she is 'less Aboriginal' in some ways, and that there was a switch mode in her mind which allowed her to 'code-switch' to fit in with different communities and environments. This was because the changes she had experienced since starting at boarding school had not allowed her to fit into her home community the way she previously had. As one participant explained:

...it's like presenting yourself depending on who you are with, and when, like you have these two different sides, but you are kinda the same... Boarding maybe, it's rough. Even though you don't get homesick anymore, you still get pissed off. At [boarding house parents] and stuff. And there's like, I don't know. They yell at you for being late... the opportunities here. Even though you hate them, they are building you up to something.

The concept of fitting in to multiple communities is connected to the idea of nested identities, earlier discussed in Chapter 1. Students at Colleges A and B described their language, worldview, ability to accept certain ways of living at home, and connection to culture as changing due to their move away to urban areas for boarding school.

While students identified that they were code-switching, or taking on multiple identities, this process or way of living was described by students in this study as causing issues related to personal identity, as well as impacting on family dynamics and relationships, experienced by students when they returned home for holidays or leave, but also via phone conversations while at school. Having ‘two sides’ or ‘personalities’ was talked about often as a fact of life since the Aboriginal students in this study had started at boarding school at Colleges A and B. One College B student spoke of her ability to take on multiple identities as a key learning she had gained during her time at boarding school, explaining that she could take on numerous personas depending on her environment and company. The personal challenge and experience of maintaining multiple identities nested among one another is seen in the words of Esme Saunders Bamblett, describing her experience of being an Aboriginal girl attending boarding school:

When I went to girls’ school to do my secondary schooling, I was the only Koorie there. I knew that I was different from the other girls, but one of the obvious differences was the way I spoke. I had a teacher there who also knew that the way I spoke was different...she used to make me stand up in class and sound out words that began with the letter ‘h’ because these were the words which I had the most difficulty with. I can still remember trying to sound out these words and having a difficult time...I also knew that the language which I was comfortable with and which I spoke at home was a different language to the school language because when I got home I had to change the way that I spoke so I was understood. One of the differences for me was trying to be accepted in both worlds. I wanted to be accepted in the school system, while, at the same time, I didn’t want to give up the acceptance by my own community. I found that the easiest thing to do was the minimum in both worlds. The minimum in the non-Koorie world was to ‘pass’ English and the minimum in the Koorie world was to only speak the school way when absolutely necessary, and never around those who would ‘send me up’. This chameleon act got me through my school years without jeopardising my home life. A lot of other Koories have fallen casualty in the battle of trying to juggle two worlds. Even when I got through the system to tertiary study I found that my language was a barrier to success in the system. I also found that my cultural ideas were barriers to success... I have realised that I have had to give up a large number of my cultural rules and norms in order to survive in this present culture (McKenry, 1996).

Students across the three boarding schools within this research expressed their own understandings of the changes they personally experienced in emotional strength, adaptability to overcrowded and female-only living conditions, ability to form relationships with others and academic success. The students in this research

expressed a belief that these changes would benefit them in the long run, even if the benefits were primarily through new friendships with others. Boarding school students in Australia spoke of gaining skills to clean and manage their own homes (washing, preparing the table, making the bed and so on). Other areas of growth included independent thought. College C students also noted their growth in Māori cultural knowledge (understanding tikanga Māori, te reo Māori development and waiata skills) as well as for six students, their Christian faith. This growth was seen as enlightenment, or a new way of viewing the world, as described in the yarning circles about the images the participants had recorded.

A theme that emerged from the photoyarn data was that students believed they had to move away to access a good education, in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. At Colleges A and B in particular, visits home in the holidays were spoken of as providing confirmation that boarding school was providing a better education and a better future for them than that available to them in their home communities. Students at Colleges B and C said that it was unlikely that they would return home after school or university, for the same reasons they believed they had to leave to access quality education. Drugs, teenage pregnancy, lack of employment opportunities, issues in their community and problems at home were all mentioned as reasons why students did not intend to return to their communities after they completed their education, including university. Even in light of the challenges the students faced regarding not being present to uphold family and cultural obligations, they thought that it was unlikely that they would return home after their time at boarding school. One student noted, 'A person should have the opportunity to leave.' This push and pull between obligation and connection to home, and the broadened opportunities boarding students experienced after life away from home, in the city at boarding school, is a complex and difficult thing for teenage women to navigate, according to the students at College B. As one stated, 'I want to go. I want to go back, but then I don't... I want to help my community, help my family out.'

Across all three sites, Indigenous girls described attending boarding school as something that changed them. It changed their perceptions of life, of themselves and of their families. It changed their views on the world and their place within it. For students at College C, this did not include a change in their cultural identity, except to deepen and enrich it. But many students at College A spoke of experiencing, for the

first time, their Aboriginality as something unpleasant to others. Herbert (2015) explains:

Aboriginal students need emotional support to attend boarding schools. Not only does this come from the home, provision also needs to be made for appropriate support to be delivered through the boarding school to enable Aboriginal children to develop the independence and strength they need to live away from their families and engage in the wider society... without the student forgetting where they came from or becoming ashamed of their Aboriginality as this can become an issue when they return to their communities (p. 4).

At Colleges A and B, students spoke of issues they had experienced with their families and communities, because of changes in their appearance, attitude, behaviour and goals in life. These students also spoke of worrying that their cultural identity was being diminished due to being away at boarding school, while College C students described boarding school as growing their knowledge of Māori culture and language. McCarthy (2013) found that Indigenous parents, when considering boarding school for their children, generally did not ask about the academic or post-school opportunities that boarding schools provided. Rather, they were concerned with the opportunities and new experiences it could provide for their children that community life could not. Building friendships and relationships with new people, including with non-Indigenous people, was seen as the greatest outcome of boarding school across the three boarding schools. The concept of boarding school changing or causing personal growth in students was also brought up across all three schools.

Aboriginal students in this study gave numerous examples of how parental reactions to their personal growth as boarding school students led to disruptive and emotional experiences, especially concerning parents being unhappy with students becoming more independent and less available for duties around the home, including to care for younger siblings. Across all three sites, students spoke of changes including independence and learning new skills. These included being able to travel alone by plane, train and bus to get around cities and back home; being able to live alone and away from family; confidence in sleeping away from family; managing money and buying their own necessities; managing time to ensure they studied enough; building friendships and relationships with new people, including non-Indigenous people in particular.

Considering the three schools in this study as connected provides the opportunity to see each context as ‘better understood as autonomous, but inter-related’

(Martin 2008, pp. 145-146). This allowed the theme of boarding school creating strong friendships, sisterhood and family-like relationships to emerge in my analysis of the entire research process. At College C, this concept was strengthened significantly by the fact that all students shared the same heritage, Māori, and many students came from the same iwi and hapū. I believe what I observed at College C is similar to the concept of whānau tangata, which encompasses both family and community: 'There is a recognition of the interdependency between the wellbeing of children, whānau, education deliverers and communities' (Hemara 2000, p. 74). This deep and lasting connection that exists within the school community at large, the whānau whanui, creates a bond between current students and their education, which in turn inspires them and pushes them not only to continue at the school but to try their best to achieve, with many supporters behind them. Students are, at all times, in the knowledge that they are intimately connected, and reliant, on the communal and the collective. 'Kotahitanga' is the best term to describe this theme, which emerged from the data of College C. Described as oneness or togetherness, kotahitanga 'is most often used in the context of unity... working together towards a common goal' (Hemara 2000, p. 72). Having strong and often large families, with specific and known roles, the girls at College C explained that the intensity of the bonds they shared with their families weakened in some ways because they attended boarding school. However, their cultural education and the strong school whānau (including friends) were enough to make them feel safe, secure and happy.

Having a critical mass of Indigenous students is described by the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation as essential to ensuring Indigenous students 'do not experience feelings of cultural isolation' (2015b, p. 35). Students at Colleges A and B noted they were inclined to speak to their Indigenous boarding school friends rather than an adult when experiencing problems. 'Leaning on each other' was a frequently used phrase to explain how having other Indigenous boarders was a positive and important part of the Australian boarding school experience for them. The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation states that, for schools that have approximately 10 Indigenous boarders, having a staff member responsible for Indigenous support is essential. An Indigenous support person 'is able to act as an advocate on the students' behalf with other staff, filter messages appropriately to students, carefully coordinate care and support for the students and ensure relationships with families' (Australian

Indigenous Education Foundation 2015b, p. 41). Students at College A spoke openly of how important it was to have an Indigenous support person available to them, while students at College B spoke of wishing they had an Aboriginal person available in the school to talk to. Students at College C spoke strongly of how important it was to have Māori women around them in the boarding house, and, as head of school leadership, to their experience as boarders.

In a study conducted by White (2004), only three out of 45 boarding school students said they experienced boarding school as a small community. In contrast, students in this study formed strong, supportive communities of their own, based on their Indigenous friends. These small communities had a significant, positive impact on their experience as boarders. One conclusion is that culture bonds Indigenous students, assisting them to form their own small communities at boarding school while studying away from home. The formation of friendships and sisterhood in this light reflects more than simply a network of students connected through residential schooling. The relatedness that underpins indigeneity was embodied by the togetherness of living in communal boarding houses, for the students in this study.

Homesickness was a challenging experience for the girls in this study. While students reported that homesickness became easier to manage over time, they explained that being away from home included much greater challenges than simply longing to return home to be with family and friends. Two significant periods of homesickness appeared across the three schools. The first was the initial weeks after moving away to commence boarding school. Several Aboriginal students noted that this was the first time they had ever slept alone in a bed, or spent a night away from their mother. The second time students mentioned as experienced homesickness was immediately after school holidays finished, when they had to return to boarding school. Students across all three sites described feeling, at times, like they did not want to return to boarding, even though they knew they should because of the opportunities it would provide them in the future. One College A student said, 'I know I should go back, but then I'm like, 'I just want to stay here and play with my baby brother all day! That makes me not want to go back to boarding.' The Association of Independent Schools New South Wales (AISNSW) states:

Some schools have reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experience homesickness which in a few cases has resulted in the

student returning to their home community. Some students are worried about the family members they have left behind (AISNSW 2015).

The pain and heartbreak of being away from home and missing family did not disappear, whether students were in touch all day (as for students at Colleges A and B) via online messaging, phone calls and emails or only twice a week via phone and letters in the mail as with College C. The support of friends and having strong cultural connections appeared to balance the pain of these experiences, as did having a clear understanding of exactly how boarding school (with its frustrations and difficulties) was preparing them for life after school. Homesickness was related to the strong bonds many students had with their families and communities, as well as the vast change between home and boarding school.

I heard students describing a mismatch between family and school expectations. Family members were described as expecting students to withdraw from school for times of family business, or for funerals, while schools expected them to stay at school, or return to school within a short period of time. This was the case for Māori and Aboriginal students at all three boarding schools. School expectations were not communicated clearly at College A in particular, and this led to students experiencing a sense of being stuck in the middle, unable to meet their school's expectation or their family responsibilities. Feelings of guilt and helplessness regarding letting down their family (by not being there to help) compounded their anxiety over whatever the issue was that they were trying to get leave for. Issues of time and the importance of being present for ceremonies and family were obvious clashes for some of the students in this study. Students at College A said:

You can't win, because if you go home for culture, you will be missing school, which is hard to catch up. They also keep calling Mum and not respecting our cultural business. That makes Mum angry then she hates on school. Then when you come back, school seems angry at you, and keep asking where you were and why you were away so long.

Yeah, and if you don't go home for sorry business, it's horrible. You are so sad and down and everyone can see it. You are crying all the time and feel so alone. It makes you feel like you are going crazy. You just want to run away. But sometimes school won't let you go back. Then Mum gets angry because she says school doesn't own me. I should be able to leave when I need to. But sorry business takes a long time so I can't always go. And then if I did go I couldn't go for all of it... which isn't right.

At Colleges A and B, sorry business, grieving and funerals were described as times of major stress and anxiety for students at boarding school. Sorry business that occurred frequently for some students was described as a distraction too great to bear. Students explained that leaving school for family death had in many cases led them to miss schoolwork, which increased their stress about assessments being incomplete, as well as teacher frustration. Students also experienced anxiety, grief and anger when they wanted to leave boarding school for funerals but were not permitted to. Students across all three sites who described times of family issues and death used phrases like ‘distracting’, ‘impossible to work on school work’, ‘can’t focus’ and ‘a waste of time being at school because it’s all I am thinking about’. Students spoke of feeling trapped or like prisoners who could not escape when they needed to. They also spoke of strategies to cope with such experiences, such as speaking to their friends, being alone, listening to music and talking to Indigenous staff.

Many students explained that they care for younger siblings at home and in the holidays. Care-giving responsibilities made the decision to stay at boarding school more difficult. ‘It’s just better when I’m there ‘cause I can help out with the kids. Mum is happier then,’ one student said. College A students named several Indigenous students who had not completed their schooling at College A, who had left to go home and help with their siblings. Feelings of guilt were inflamed by messages and calls received from home, and complaints about how hard life is at home without them. Students again described feeling trapped and helpless in these situations. All three schools placed restrictions on when students could take leave during term time. This was frustrating for students in this study and was spoken of as causing unaccounted leave, distraction and emotional distress. At Colleges A and B, many girls spoke of a growing disconnection to their culture, and of feelings of letting their family down because they were unable to maintain their cultural obligations. As noted in Chapter 2, country as an Aboriginal concept informs spiritual connections, belonging, obligations, responsibilities and behaviours for Aboriginal people (New South Wales Government 2014). Such obligations extend to boarding school students who are Aboriginal, including their understandings of where a person belongs and the responsibilities they have to their families, including parents and siblings, to their elders and to their communities. When students could not uphold these obligations, they experienced distress while they were away at boarding school.

Beneviste et al. (2014) explain that, while Indigenous students in boarding schools are separated from culture and community, it is up to the boarding school to facilitate ongoing connection to their Aboriginality. Of Aboriginal boarding school advocate Noel Pearson, Beneviste et al. (2014) state:

[Noel] Pearson has been advocating for improved access, uptake and achievement in education, including the promotion of secondary education through boarding programs. Interestingly, these two concepts are conflicting. While boarding is purported as enabling children to be bi-cultural, improving competency in their own community and in the mainstream world, there is no acknowledgement of parent or family role in this process. Beyond the application for and agreement to send their children to board, what does Pearson, who has specifically addressed the need for parental involvement, suggest this looks like once your child is halfway across the country? How can parents still engage at the level he is implying? Pearson is just one example of many voices that are recommending boarding programs, without engaging in the deeper and more complex discussions required of this educational model (p. 9).

While children are away at boarding school, every parent will have their own unique involvement with their child's school. In the case of the students in this study, involvement by parents included emotional support from home rather than physical presence by visiting the school. The students of College C, for example, usually see their parents in four holiday breaks a year, with two short phone calls home each week. Yet the outcomes for students at College C are high on all regular markers of student success such as attendance, retention and attainment. Students at College C noted their feelings of being 'disconnected' from the outside world – a mixture of being protected from influences that they, their families and the school consider unproductive or unnecessary (e.g. social media), as well as being unable to contact those they loved as often as they wanted. They were restricted by their lack of communication and internet, however this was also spoken of by students as encouraging creativity, making them less reliant on technology for connection to others, and creating stronger friendships. It was also described as something that strengthened their independence.

Students at Colleges A and B all felt there was a lack of Indigenous content in their learning at boarding school, both in class and in extracurricular time. Some students could not remember a single time they had heard about anything Indigenous in class, while others could identify a few times but did not see these as particularly meaningful. The lack of Indigenous events and culture at College A was seen as a reflection of how little 'the school' cared for Indigenous people, including the

Indigenous girls in this study. As a group, the College A students believed that their teachers had a general lack of knowledge about Aboriginal issues. Some students voiced their opinion that this was evidence of racism. Others spoke of the lack of knowledge as a lack of care for Indigenous students, while others interpreted this as a lack of knowledge due to a lack of opportunity or interest to learn. Students strongly expressed the opinion that if Indigenous perspectives were woven through subjects in meaningful ways, it would make their education relevant and engaging.

Students voiced their belief that increased cultural awareness and Indigenous content in the curriculum would minimise racism from both teachers and students, which students spoke of as one of the difficult experiences of attending boarding school. This concept was reflected in the work of Bishop and Berryman (2006), who found students from the five schools they interviewed spoke often of how they felt that teachers did not care for them as Māori. One student said, ‘Being Māori. Some teachers are racist. They say bad things about us... Just cause we are Māori’ (p. 11). When asked how this could be improved, the Māori students suggested:

They should make it so that you have to. If you are a teacher you have to learn about the Māori culture. Because in every school there are Māori students...
Some of the things about how our culture works. They need to learn about some of our special things, the things that we do.
Some of our special beliefs, things that we respect (p. 12).

These sentiments echo the views of students at College A, who described their disappointment that a school with a large Indigenous program had such little understanding of Aboriginal cultures and did not include more Aboriginal content. As one College A student noted:

It’s like they are happy to get us up in paint to dance for show, but they don’t see our culture as meaningful for learning.

Being Aboriginal in a non-Indigenous school was identified as a challenging experience. As one student noted, ‘I have [the other Indigenous boarders], but there’s no other Aboriginal girls in my year, no investment in culture.’ Students at College B described being lumped together as Aboriginal girls, and being mistaken for one another due to their skin colour. One explained that when a friend discovered she was Aboriginal it initially strained their relationship. Krakouer (2015) explains that the

role of culture in improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students cannot be ignored:

Culture is a vital aspect of identity... the education system may or may not be aligned with our cultural worldview and previous experiences. Predominately, this is the case for culturally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Culturally responsive teaching can rectify this issue and assist Indigenous students to cope with the mismatch between home and schooling environments, thereby subsequently improving educational outcomes (p. 18).

When Indigenous cultures are not included in education, Indigenous students become invisible in what they learn, and learning becomes disconnected from their personal experiences and realities. It also creates a bigger gap between the way of life at school and the way of life at home. As the AISNSW (2015) submission to the parliamentary inquiry into educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students states:

The importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and histories within an inclusive curriculum is recognised by NSW independent schools. Where schools engage in perspectives across the curriculum in an authentic manner, with support from the local, Aboriginal community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students develop a sense of belonging as well as an opportunity to engage meaningfully in a relevant curriculum (p. 16).

Klenowski (2009) argues that Australian assessment practices favour Western knowledges, rather than the many other cultural knowledges Indigenous students may hold when attending Western schools such as boarding schools in Australia. This is part of the broader lack of Indigenous curriculum content students in this study spoke of at Colleges A and B. In addition to cultural differences, wealth disparity also affected students, most commonly through the scholarships they received. Indigenous disadvantage in affluent schools can position Indigenous students as needy and lacking, further extending the gap between student and staff perceptions of what it means to be a regular student and an Indigenous student attending boarding. As one student at College A explained:

They reckon we are here for free. They don't even know what scholarship it is. They have no idea that this school gets exactly the same amount of money for us, as it does for them. We are paying fees the same. The money just comes to school from somewhere else. They don't make that clear to the students so they pay us out.

Another student at College A explained:

The teachers say it too. You are on a scholarship here so you should know better, work harder, whatever.

McCarthy's (2016) research in a Queensland boarding school points to racism in Australian boarding schools as coming not only from students and teachers but also from the school community, which includes parents and families. He found that the number of Indigenous students enrolled at a boarding school influenced the choice of whether non-Indigenous parents chose to send their children to that school. Parents considered the racial composition of a school (regarding Indigenous to non-Indigenous enrolments) when selecting schools for their children. Some of the participants in McCarthy's study questioned the validity of education programs that focused on Indigenous students. One parent stated that the school 'turned my children into racists' because of her children's exposure to groups of Indigenous students where the perceived educational divide was evident to them. Another parent suggested that Indigenous education programs were failing miserably, intimating these programs set Indigenous students against non-Indigenous students (McCarthy 2016, p. 39). Keeping a racial balance was a priority for the school principals interviewed in McCarthy's (2016) study, primarily to ensure the school remained attractive to non-Indigenous enrolments. One principal stated:

We try to maintain a racial balance. Certainly, Indigenous to non-Indigenous we try to maintain at least one to one, a maximum of one to one... It is conceded that the enrolment of Indigenous students brings challenges that are difficult to justify on the basis of integration and racial balance (McCarthy 2016, p. 40).

McCarthy's study demonstrates examples of parental racism. A principal is quoted as saying that parents in enrolment interviews were very blatant in their questions about the numbers of Indigenous students in the school, to the point of saying things like, 'I am happy for Indigenous kids to get an education but not with my kids,' or, 'I don't want my kids sleeping next to a black kid' (2016, p. 40). McCarthy makes the point that, with government assistance and access to scholarships, Indigenous families are now able to transcend their 'class position' – an opportunity they once did not have access to, and one that they embrace and actively engage in, with the aim of better education and post-school outcomes for their children.

In Australian boarding schools, there is an undeniable clash between indigeneity, whiteness, race and social class/capital. Students at College B, where Indigenous scholarships are explained as being achievement-based, and where the application process is in the same vein as academic and sporting scholarships, reported feeling proud of their scholarships, as they were positioned in their school as equal to other scholarships received on merit. The support for scholarships may be creating class, if students are judged for having needs-based scholarships. With many students coming from communities with little experience of class distinctions this experience can be difficult, with Indigenous boarders facing destructive stereotypes that they are getting extra or are simply not equal to others. Racial comments were not seen as being dealt with by staff at College A, and this led to students feeling that their school was racist. Participants at College A gave many examples of other students making racist remarks, with not one student feeling that racist incidents were dealt with fairly by the school. Most students felt that when they notified College A of racist remarks by other students, they were brushed aside and incidents often were not dealt with at all. This was the case with teachers, their boarding mistress and the principal. Aboriginal youth in this study spoke openly about identity issues and the challenges they faced at boarding school, with regard to other students, and teachers' views of them and their indigeneity. As Kearney states:

It is the Indigenous youth, those living in rural and urban centres, individuals and families of inter-ethnic descent, and those who differentially activate their indigeneity over their life course, that have become fringe dwellers in a climate of cultural tropes... [facing] public discourses of indigeneity, particularly within corners occupied by the White hegemonic ethnic norm, as to who is Indigenous, when is someone Indigenous enough, and what indigeneity means in the context of contemporary Australia (Kearney 2013, p. 245).

Regardless of the racism which was described as upsetting by students at College A, the data gathered and analysed by the students showed that boarding school was still seen as offering greater opportunities and a better education than local schools in their home communities. College A students said that in their previous schooling experiences in country Australia, teacher quality was lacking, school resources were scarce and classes were disrupted by other students with behavioural and social issues, which affected them as pupils attending classes. In McCarthy's (2013) study, Aboriginal parents also reported boarding school as being preferable to local schooling, for reasons including that the students had fewer community issues

within the school, fewer distractions and a greater chance of broadening their social networks with non-Indigenous students. Combined, boarding school was perceived as opening doors to better and more successful futures (McCarthy 2013). Students at all three colleges in Australia as well as in Aotearoa New Zealand described poor schooling in their regional or rural communities. One College A student described such schooling as ‘the teacher writing notes on the board, and us copying them down in our books every day. I don’t think I learned a single thing. I reckon it was just to keep us quiet’. This issue was raised by Māori pupils talking about their school experiences in the work of Bishop and Berryman (2006), in which one student said, ‘they just write it up on the board... We have teachers like that, that just write stuff up on the board and they just say, ‘copy that down’. Some teachers just chuck it up on the board...’ (p. 25). Another noted:

Well, it’s like this...they tell us they’d rather not be here. The worst teachers always teach the same way. Heaps of writing just to keep us going. I reckon they’re scared of us...I reckon they can’t control us, and they can’t control us because they don’t prepare interesting stuff for us to do...the problem is they have expected most of us to be pains since our first day in class. So we...oblige [raucous laughter] (p. 34).

Māori students in Bishop and Berryman’s (2006) study, like the Aboriginal girls of Colleges A and B, interpreted uninterested teaching as a clear sign that they were not valued as students. Students indicated that low teacher expectations led to disengagement and boredom in class and poor student behaviour, which often resulted in students not attending classes at all. College A students described such conditions when they talked about why it was good to attend boarding school. They said that compared to the schools in their home communities in regional and rural areas, boarding school had increased their engagement in classes, as well as their attendance.

Students at Colleges A and B blamed, in some part, the lack of quality education in their community schools for large gaps in their knowledge. Some spoke of this gap as being something that increased the difficulty they had when they started at boarding school, with regard to the standard of work and behaviour expected. Students spoke of schoolwork at boarding school being much harder than at home. This was an added pressure to the social and environmental changes the students experienced when transitioning to boarding school. Students at all three sites said boarding school provided more opportunities than local schools for those students

living outside metropolitan areas. This finding was supported by the work of de Campo (2010), who interviewed 30 Indigenous students, and found:

Students spoke about 'hard work', 'better resources', 'learn[ing] more', 'consequences' and 'finish Year 12' when referring to their education at Victorian secondary boarding schools. When describing their previous schools, students used words and phrases such as 'not the best', 'small', 'slack' and 'baby work'. The majority of student participants used the word 'boring' when talking about their former school (p. 30).

Boarding, however, 'is not the only answer to remote education. This simple truth makes it incumbent on governments and others to provide a range of educational options, including high quality remote education' (Australian Human Rights Commission 2009, p. 142). Indigenous educators, including Downey and Hart (2012), Ketchell (2012) and Phillips (2012), explain that placing the 'fault' of Indigenous underachievement on Indigenous peoples themselves takes the blame away from non-Indigenous educators with Western worldviews and biases, rendering them (as is often the case with whiteness), invisible (Moreton-Robinson 2004). The poor teaching practices that students in Colleges A, B and C experienced in community schools they had previously attended caused issues for them when they did commence boarding school.

In Australia, Indigenous outcomes are almost always compared to non-Indigenous outcomes, and measured using Western or non-Indigenous measures of success. Such practices do not:

provide scope to explore how notions of cultural relevance and Indigenous people's understandings of a successful education inform educational decision-making when strategic initiatives and outcomes are measured only on non-Indigenous terms (Whatman & Singh 2015, p. 219).

On the measuring of Indigenous students against non-Indigenous markers of success, Nakata states that Indigenous Australians, since colonisation, have been represented as:

having lacked everything there is to have... intellect, language, education, finance, social skills... as fathers and mothers – we lacked as children, we lacked as students... information and mainstream experiences...from the time of the first anthropological expedition...you name it, we lack it (Nakata 2001, p. 341).

Students in this study however, believed that with hard work they were capable of achieving great things. This was a change that had occurred in them because of their

boarding experiences, which gave them ambitions for the future and opened their eyes to a new world, but also presented some difficult and painful experiences, losses and distancing from culture, family and community.

Through relatedness, we might understand what these themes mean, in terms of impact on Indigenous students at boarding schools physically, mentally, and spiritually. For example, the push and pull of obligations caused by boarding school, when viewed through relatedness, presents a different set of challenges to students who are removed physically from their families and communities.

The connections that bind all aspects of life together for Indigenous peoples are like a web, and when one part of the web is shaken, all other parts are affected. Consider the theme students at Colleges A and B found regarding sorry business. The emotions students described, trying to keep their school work at boarding on track while maintaining their obligations to family and country, when viewed through relatedness, include more than just experiences of grieving for a loved one, missing the support of family members, or disappointment at not being able to attend a funeral. As Babidge (2006) states:

When people die... their specific relatedness to all those around them, their relationship choices and all those of their closest family are brought into focus. 'Calling the family together' is the crucial action close family are charged with...adult children might relocate their own families to live nearby... or stay near the hospital...some even taking out small loans to fund the travel. Immediately after a death, news of it circulates...Who is notified and how soon is an obvious statement of the closeness and distance of relatedness (p. 59).

When viewed through a lens of relatedness, not being informed of a person's death immediately, because of lack of contact (e.g. without access to a mobile phone in the middle of the night, or in class) suddenly takes on a whole new meaning, as does the inability to return to community for the funeral or to assist with the duties required. The conflict experienced by students at boarding, away from family in times such as sorry business, is deeper than the grief many people experience when they lose loved ones. Grief is experienced internally and spiritually, connected to the cultural and social expectations that exist within the fabric of who Indigenous boarders are, and, the broader community fabric within which students form individual threads. Maintaining their part in the whole means keeping 'obligations toward kin, to stand by them in times of conflict...contexts in which kin terms are extended to all known

persons... obligation' (Glaskin 2012, p. 298). To not be present or available at such times causes boarding students to be removed from the fabric of their extended relations; boarders within this study at Colleges A and B described this experience as distressing, and sometimes leading to physical symptoms.

Boarding schools present problems to indigenous families because, by their very nature, they prevent aspects of relatedness from being enacted. While away for schooling, it is physically impossible for students to be in two places at once, meaning that there will be times during their school journey that students cannot be present for cultural and family business. This distance is not only physical, but spiritual and emotional. In some cases, the disconnection becomes too great to bear, for students, but also for those others who remain at home. These divides stretch larger at certain times, according to the students in this study, including when people pass away, and when there are child-rearing responsibilities for them as young women at home, these times causing the threads of relatedness to become frayed and stretched. While the somewhat restrictive structures of boarding schooling are essential in keeping order and routine, there needs to be a loosening of these at times when the strands of relatedness are stretched for Indigenous girls at boarding school. As Yunkaporta (2009) explains:

When you play clap sticks, you can't hold them too tight – *dum dum* – this makes a muffled sound. Too loose and they chatter – *drrrrrrr* – but that place between tight and loose – that's the way to get the best sound – *chip chip*. It's the same with our children – in Aboriginal society we know to give them that balance between communal support and independence. That delicate balance between relatedness and autonomy is central to Aboriginal worldviews (p. 28).

Further research is required into the effect of better, increased communication between home and boarding schools, before students make the move to boarding school. This communication should not only focus on the things students should expect day to day at boarding school – including rules, regulations, procedures and environment – but also aspects of boarding school life that may impact on their cultural and familial obligations, for example, limited ability to return home for sorry business.

The results of this research show that boarding schools undeniably provide Indigenous students with new social, cultural and educational experiences. Rigorous data collection and analysis across all education systems regarding the outcomes of

boarding schools and their effects on Indigenous girls across the nation is required and recommended. The many interrelated variables of boarding school education for Indigenous students make the effects of such schools difficult to measure. Qualitative data is essential to understand the relationships between the interconnected causes of disengagement of Indigenous girls who have left boarding school without having completed their schooling. The paucity of research specifically focused on Indigenous student experiences in boarding schools today calls for broad and rigorous studies into Indigenous boarding outcomes across Australia. Research also needs to consider the effect of boarding schools on those who are left behind at home. This includes family, friends and other members of the community. With many scholarship programs taking the brightest and best Indigenous students from their small communities and enrolling them in private schools in urban locations, the structures of communities are undoubtedly changed. When bright and dedicated young Indigenous students who show potential are sent to boarding school as children, there is little chance they will return before adulthood or even after. Further research is required in order to understand the impact of this on both students and their home communities.

Future research needs to be conducted into understanding the effect that non-Indigenous schooling has on Indigenous boarders' sense of self and identity and how this affects their futures. As described by students in this study, non-Indigenous boarding schools affect the way Indigenous people see themselves, and also how their families and communities view them. Battiste (1998) states that successful education programs for Indigenous peoples must emerge from Indigenous social and cultural frames of reference, embodying Indigenous philosophical foundations and spiritual understandings. It must be built on the experiences and gifts of Indigenous people and be based on economic needs rather than a secular experience that fragments knowledges (p. 21). The education system available to students in Australia is not built on Indigenous ways of understanding, beliefs or spiritual understandings. An ignorance of Aboriginal intellectual and spiritual capital has led to many students being isolated in a system that was never built for them, and communities being blamed for the 'failure' of Indigenous students and their outcomes in the school system.

Street (2003) asks important questions when it comes to Indigenous education: whose literacies are dominant, and whose are marginalised? It is clear that

separating Indigenous peoples from their ancestral literacies has had devastating effects, both socially and culturally, for First Peoples the world over (Rawiri 2008). The results seen in Indigenous education when cultural literacies are fostered, however, show success not only in the grasp of Indigenous literacies but in English and Western literacies also. College C provides an excellent example of indigenous education centred on indigenous ways of being, this case study demonstrating that indigenous girls in boarding schools can achieve success when indigeneity is centred, celebrated and nurtured alongside academic rigour.

Indigenous literacies include the ability to communicate and to understand natural elements, systems and seasons (Edwards 2010). They include art, song, dance, story and interpersonal communication, as well as spiritual communication. For Māori, literacies include:

whaikōrero, karanga, pao, waiata, whakatauki and general kōrero. Other literacy forms... whakairo, raranga, taniko, kowhaiwhai just to name a few... These literacy forms were relegated to categories of 'inferior' and 'quaint' and were gradually subjugated (Edwards 2010, p. 30).

For Australian Indigenous peoples, our literacies (yarning, stories, song, carving, weaving, painting, languages and so on) have for many years been considered inferior to the 'real' business of education in this country. This is changing. Elements are being gradually included, but they are very rarely *centred* in education. Literacy is not the ability to communicate in English; 'Literacy is the means with which to express, understand, provide for, and make sense of, one's self and the whole richness of one's self in its widest cultural, spiritual, intellectual and physical sense' (Edwards 2010, p. 31). Australian schooling pushes cultural, spiritual and physical aspects of literacy aside, and intellectual literacy is diminished to the English language only, as evidenced by standardised tests such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the Queensland Core Skills test (QCS), which must be completed in Australian English. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the context is very different for tangata whenua. With te reo Māori considered a national language, the argument that Indigenous education in Aotearoa New Zealand should include Indigenous culture and language, as is the case at College C, is much stronger. Edwards (2010) argues that one example of covert racism is found in Aotearoa New Zealand government literacy agendas, which view learning as only:

valid in the English language and not in the indigenous language. This is quite obviously an oppressive agenda that contributes to the maintenance of the dominance of the English language over the Māori language – te reo Māori, and further highlights an abuse of power. This is further manifest when we realise that Māori experiences of English literacy are primarily schooling experiences and that those experiences have caused ethno-stress and trauma for many. The marginalisation of te reo Māori... from current literacy agendas mimics the assimilation policies of the 1900s... the bias towards English language gives dominant literacy discourses a perceived, but incorrect distinction of superiority, both racial and ideological... (Edwards 2010, p. 32).

Antone and Cordoba (2005) argue that Aboriginal languages, culture and tradition must lead literacy learning for Aboriginal people. The fact that Indigenous students attending boarding schools from remote areas might speak several traditional languages, as well as Aboriginal English or Torres Strait creole as a first language, is often overlooked in our current education system that continues to oppress Australian Indigenous literacies. This is demonstrated by the dominance of English language as the only form of literacy that counts in Australian schools and in the national curriculum. The idea of what literacy is, or what counts as being literate, ultimately reflects and promotes certain values, beliefs and practices that shape life within societies, and as such influence which interests are promoted or diminished. In Australia, Indigenous literacies are not recognised as core to schooling, and this lack of recognition has diminished the interests of Indigenous peoples. This is found the world over, as:

Government ideologies worldwide do not consider indigenous peoples or our ideas as regards key and important areas of work that impact significantly on indigenous identity and well-being. Indigenous people will need to powerfully continue to remind our colonisers that Eurocentric thought is not the benchmark against which all knowledge and good ideas should be measured. At the same time we will need to provide counter narratives as to what literacies count, what counts as literacy and be the ones to say so (Edwards 2010, p. 36).

The deficit discourse that surrounds Indigenous students and their lack of achievement in English literacy is much more about power than it is about student ability. As Lankshear and McLaren (1993) explain, literacies are ideological, reflecting power structures as well as serving interests. Further research into the effect of the Australian school system, and particularly, of non-Indigenous education on Indigenous student identity would be valuable toward understanding the findings of this thesis within the greater Australian education context. Above all, Indigenous

student voices must be included in any work undertaken on Indigenous boarding, and further Indigenous comparisons abroad, so that we might learn from the successes and mistakes that have already been made in Indigenous boarding education.

This chapter has discussed the themes that emerged across the three schools, gleaned from the visual and textual data elicited by the photoyarn/kōreropikitia method. Photoyarn, while successful in its aim of amplifying student voice, did not fully allow the students in this particular study to yarn about deeper emotions experienced by some students. While this was not the aim of the method, nor the research, photoyarn could be developed and used in culturally appropriate and safe settings to give students this opportunity, for example with an Indigenous psychologist, cultural healer or elders. What photoyarn as a method most effectively provided was an opportunity for students who I did not know previously to share with me, as researcher, their issues and feelings they were comfortable with. Our connections, through indigeneity, were a starting point for building equal relationships with a solid level of trust. Although in its infancy, this method has the potential to effectively engage students, young people and community members in meaningful Indigenous research.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to listen to Indigenous student voices in answering the research question: what can female Aboriginal student voices tell us about their contemporary boarding experiences in Australia? This question is also followed by two secondary questions: how can student voice be amplified through arts-based Indigenous research? Do Indigenous students in Aotearoa New Zealand have similar experiences while away from home at boarding school? These research questions were explored through research which aimed to centre ‘student voice’, a term that describes the participation and involvement of students in educational practices (Hadfield & Haw 2001). Cook-Sather (2006) explains:

warnings against particular understandings and uses of voice are valid – warnings about constructing voice as equal to an individual, as single and uncomplicated, as given rather than constructed in relationship (p. 7).

The theoretical underpinning of this thesis recognises the relatedness of all aspects of the data, student voices, and the researcher, and the fact that the relationships between each of these elements informed one another through connectedness and relatedness. Even so, when using the term ‘student voice’ in this thesis, I was mindful that I must try not to muddy:

the difference between the writer (she who writes) and the text (that which is written); text becomes synonymous with student writer, and writing is regarded as a ‘transparent medium through which the “person behind the text” can be seen (Gilbert 1989, p. 22).

Throughout this work, I maintained my voice as researcher separate to those of the 35 students I worked alongside. This thesis was written in a way that maintained Indigenous student voice, while also leaving room for my voice as researcher. I consider these as parts of one whole - individuals who together form the collective. That being said, issues of student voice are, of course, always influenced by relationship and power: ‘who is speaking to whom turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said; in fact what is said turns out to change according to

who is speaking and who is listening' (Alcoff cited in Fielding 2004a, p. 300). In this research, Indigenous boarding school students spoke to me as an Aboriginal researcher, and I listened. What I heard from them answered the research question that framed this study.

I started this research with a goal of amplifying student voices through research that was underpinned by Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing (Martin, 2003). The result was the development of a new method that allowed Indigenous students to lead research. As well as providing answers to the research question around the specific experiences of boarding schools, student yarns covered colonisation, the Stolen Generations, assimilation and other experiences; demonstrating that students at Colleges A and B had a conscious understanding of the painful history of Australia's Indigenous peoples that in some ways was being experienced in the present. This informed, through relatedness, the way they viewed the experiences they described in their boarding school classrooms, dorms and extracurricular activities. The analysis process within this study allows the reader to consider the impact of the past on the present through the lens of relatedness. I have constantly filtered then reconnected student stories in this research, moving between historical stories and the learnings of other Indigenous scholars, in 'intellectual, cultural, historical, physical, spiritual spaces of the research...to distil my own realities as a person...to ensure that I not just 'view'...but 'come alongside' (Martin 2008, p. 128). We come alongside the students in this study by not only listening to their voices, but by also hearing their meanings. This requires filtering through an Indigenous worldview or lens, so we might see how they see the world, even if just for a moment.

At Colleges A and B, students showed resistance to racism, pushed for inclusion of Indigenous cultures in their schooling, and showed pride in their Indigenous identity, demonstrating what Nakata (2013) argues has been prominent in identity politics for the last decade: that one can either choose to be Aboriginal, or not:

There is no in-between position... those who are now not recognisably Aboriginal people in the physical sense, those whose continuity with cultural practices has been interrupted, or those who have been inter-generationally disconnected and seek to return... It also means there is a willingness to take those disconnected from their families back into the fold... However, while 'dual' or 'mixed' heritage is accepted, an individual's primary political and cultural identification must be demonstrably Indigenous (pp. 136-137).

Choosing to identify with one's Indigenous identity has become a part of the journey for those reconnecting with their histories after colonial disruption. This choice, however, is difficult and fraught with challenges, both from non-Indigenous and Indigenous bystanders who continually make judgements on who can and cannot be Indigenous, as described in Chapter 1 by my own journey. The students in this study were clear they had chosen to identify as Aboriginal, and as such were often excluded from those who were not, in various activities of the boarding schools they were attending. The identity issues experienced by Indigenous boarding students in this study are important to note. They are essential in gaining a broad understanding of the greatest challenges faced by Indigenous boarding students, both while attending boarding schools and when they return to their communities with a different identity and understanding of who they are as people.

Conducting Indigenous research with Aboriginal and Māori students, and developing a new Indigenous method that drew upon Indigenous methodologies as well as non-Indigenous research paradigms and methods, proved to be a meaningful and successful process. Photoyarn as a method is one of the successes of this project. The modification of photoyarn into *kōreropikitia* was a necessary adaptation when working in the Māori context, however both forms of the method are in their infancy. With further use and development, these methods could increase the agency of young people, including Indigenous young people, who wish to examine and comment on their own experiences toward informing change and influencing their own educational experiences. As stakeholders in education, photoyarn is a method that allows students of all backgrounds and educational levels to enter into a dialogue with those who traditionally hold power in schools: parents, teachers, staff, principals and other adults who make or influence the rules. Allowing participants to identify and analyse the themes of their own data allowed student voice to remain central to this research. This all rested on the connectedness we formed as Indigenous women working together, as is informed by relatedness theory (Martin, 2003). These relationships are, regrettably, not able to be described as meaningfully as I would like in written words – but I *feel* them. Some connections simply cannot be put into written or spoken words. That is the power, too, of image.

My own journey as a researcher working with 35 unique Indigenous young women across three schools, two countries and many different cultural nations and iwi

caused me to grow as a researcher and as a person. My time spent with these outstanding individuals reminded me of the incredible resilience, passion, dedication and potential of Indigenous students working to make their world a better and brighter place for themselves, their families and their communities. The findings in this thesis that I write from my own perspectives, informed through our research together, give student voice a chance to be heard in the very limited literature that exists on Indigenous girls' boarding school experiences in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

My reflections and thoughts within this work come from my own perspectives as a researcher who entered, if only for a short while, the world of Indigenous boarding for the 35 participants in this research. My perspectives present more questions than answers, and this in itself is an important conclusion of my work. I did not aim to find solutions to the issues that are prevalent in the current boarding school climate for Aboriginal girls. The core issues raised in my recommendations are provided as loose strings that will hopefully be woven into future research and policy developments that will better the boarding school world for Indigenous young people, and Indigenous young women in particular. The Education Alliance (2004) states:

Students are held accountable to many layers of adults in schools, including teachers...not to mention home and community. Who is accountable to students? Once a student has offered their informed knowledge, their thoughtful ideas, and their insightful critiques of schools, who is obligated to actually listen to them? Who is accountable to actually act on what students say? (p. 6)

This journey would not have been possible without the voices of the Indigenous students who walked it with me, or, especially, the countless Indigenous scholars who walked before me. Their work makes space for Indigenous research such as this, and for Indigenous scholars like me. Kovach gives voice to some of my many difficult experiences as a PhD scholar, working within the confines of academia as an Indigenous researcher looking to conduct Indigenous research alongside Indigenous students:

Shape-shifting in the academy means opening windows for fresh air. Creating new conceptual tools is a powerful strategy, for these new tools demand new relationship dynamics. Indigenous research frameworks provide opportunities for tribal epistemologies to enter the tightly guarded academic research community and have great potential to serve Indigenous worldviews in the academy, as well as the academy itself...The growing critical mass of

Indigenous graduate students is best positioned to define and sustain Indigenous methodologies (2009, p. 163-164).

In concluding this thesis, I hope that my original contribution of photoyarn as a new Indigenous method opens such windows of fresh air. My journey to complete this work started with a goal of contributing to mob, especially toward Aboriginal girls I had seen struggling with cultural challenges while attending Australian boarding schools. Little did I know that this PhD journey would see me become a student struggling with the cultural issues that are deeply embedded within academia. The constant push-back I received throughout this journey from those with little to no understanding of Indigenous research only made me work harder. As Biermann states:

The legacies of colonialism weigh heavily on the contemporary Academy which, rather than a place of enlightenment and liberation is...an oppressive agent of colonialism. This is especially apparent whenever it really matters: when theses are examined...Here, the status quo asserts itself most strongly and forcefully defines and defends what counts as legitimate knowledge (2011, p. 392)

This thesis is, on one hand, a product required of me by academia, one that will be judged by markers and other academics alike. On the other hand, it is my personal contribution, a tapestry formed by threads woven in this journey I have taken with many others over the past three years. The research questions that this thesis addressed informed the development of photoyarn in this work. Whether a method designed for Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous students can be utilised by non-Indigenous co-researchers effectively is yet to be seen. What is clear is that this research did amplify Indigenous student voices and stories through Indigenous research practices and methods. Archibald (2001) describes the process of sewing together many individual voices into one story: 'I called this pedagogy storywork because the engagement of story, storyteller, and listener created a synergy for meaning making through the story and making one work to obtain meaning and understanding' (Archibald, 2001, p. 1). In this thesis, I worked to maintain the messages of the Indigenous boarders, alongside my own voice, sewing together with my own thread the many voices that make up the body of this work. Martin (2008) described her PhD research as storywork, and her role, as researcher, as storyworker. In this type of research, the resulting thesis:

contains the research Stories as these have been learned...uncovered through sitting amongst them, listening, thinking, talking, Storyworking and then reading, drawing, and writing. They are now represented...a new way to see, hear and know these Stories (Martin, 2008, p. 107).

As I sewed together this thesis using the threads of my own understanding to connect the many stories shared with me, I felt as though I were sewing a possum-skin cloak. Like a PhD, these cloaks record stories from different parts of a person's journey. The cloak usually sewn for its wearer over time, as 'making a possum skin cloak is an act of storytelling and map-making...the map is always useable and always accurate, because the very thing being mapped is the identity of the wearer' (Cook 2015).

This thesis leaves us with knowledge of student experiences we did not have before. It leaves us with the stories of individuals and how they feel living away from home, how boarding school creates strong friendships and community among Indigenous students and how boarding school is seen as a pathway toward a bright future for students. It leaves us with the knowledge that arts-based Indigenous research does allow student voice to be centred in research. It also leaves us with the knowledge that deeper research must be conducted into the long-term effects of boarding school for all involved, including families and communities. This thesis, like a cloak, holds the stories of the students who worked with me in this work. While the student stories were unique in their own ways, are recorded in this thesis, these pages, like possum pelts. Sewn together, these pages/pelts connect and relate to one another, while maintaining their individuality symbols - a possum skin cloak sewn together with relatedness as the thread.

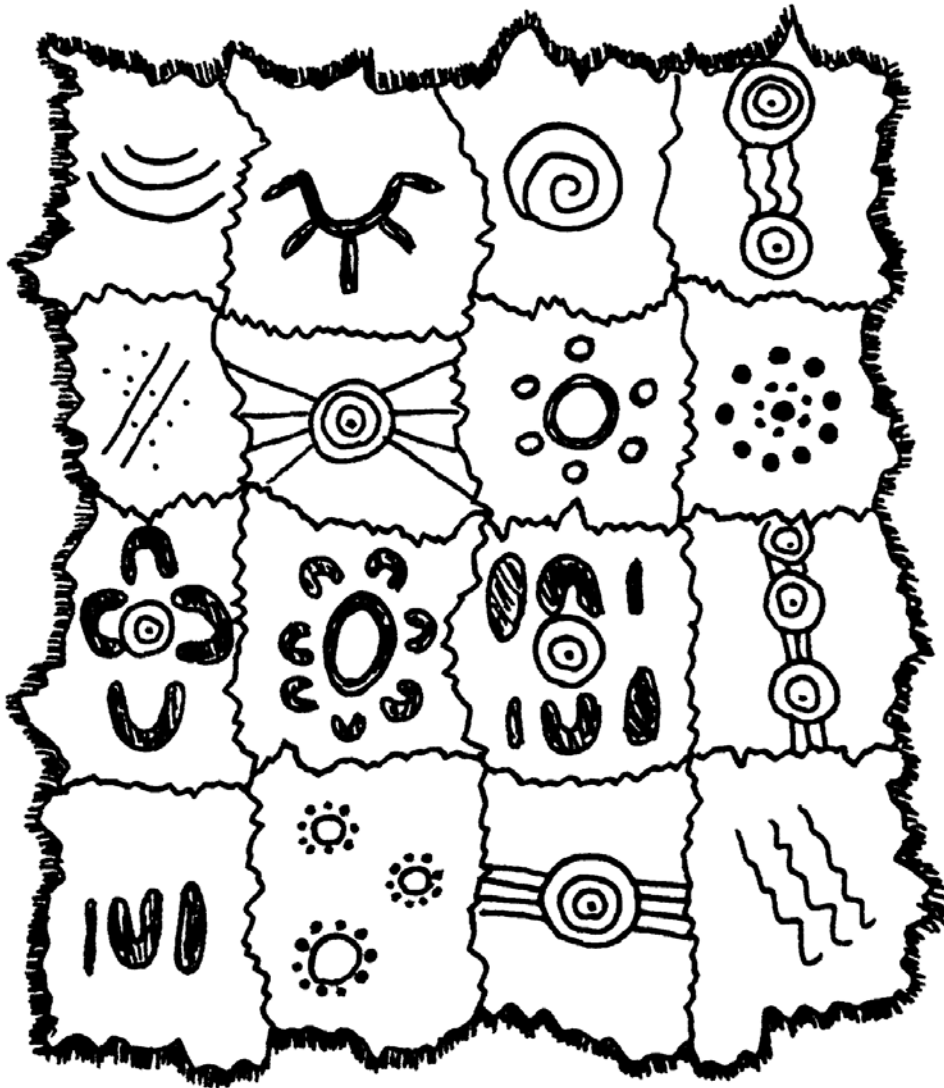


Figure 2: Relatedness as the theoretical underpinning of this work

*ABORIGINALIZING METHODOLOGY:
CONSIDERING THE CANOE*

don't continue to lock us in your semiotic conceptual prisons
we're inmate enough as it is without being immured
by the cementum of your white discourse...

catching fish is different from studying toward a phd
(though they can both be done at the same time) in that fishing can sustain life...

theory yes we devised ideas too frameworks
when there was time to reflect refract diffract diffuse...

how can methodology be separate from the living
of an ethical compassionate life together with...

as first peoples of this land our responsibilities include
to take into accountability not just measurability
our relationships with the rest of creation

(Cole 2002, pp. 456-457)

APPENDIX 1

Visual data theming from College A

Contrast *Subthemes*

Visual Data

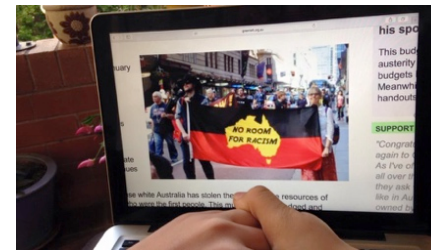
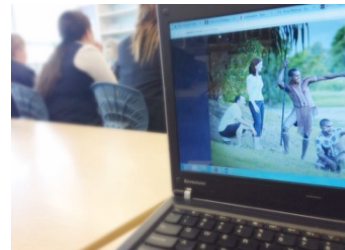
Lack of understanding of
Aboriginal people

Discrimination/racism

Aboriginal flag

Culture

Friends become family



Connection
Subthemes

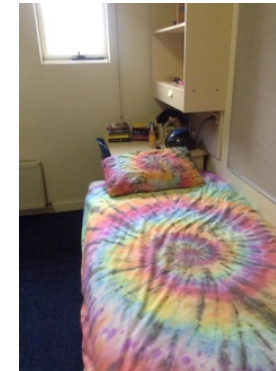
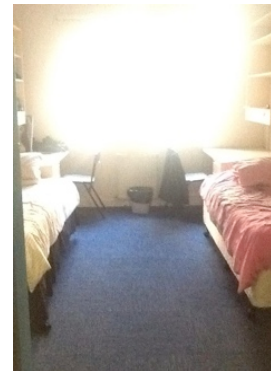
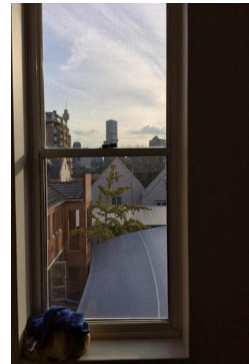
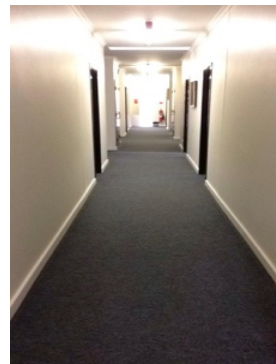
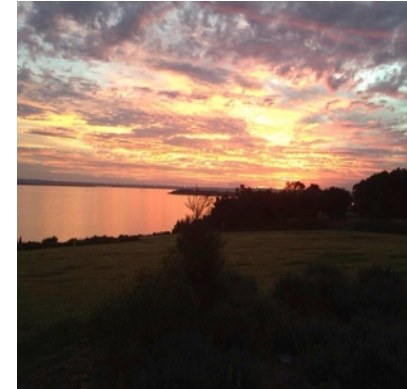
Visual Data

Isolation and loneliness at
boarding school

Home is where I can be
myself, where I am safe and
with those I love

Home has no opportunities
for the future

Bright light at the end/within
darkness



APPENDIX 2

Visual data theming from College C

*Pikitia**Kōrero**Emergent
Subthemes*

*This is friendship, sisters.
Walking the journey together*

Sisterhood

Friendship

Journey



I took this because it was so abundant with lemons, you know, it was so full-on and packed, it was crowded and that's kind of what boarding is some times and in a way it shows us growing together, in close proximity. And I noticed there was some on the ground, and some still growing. I guess that's kind of showing, um, me as a senior, it's gonna be our time to go soon, that's us falling off the tree, but another set of lemons will come, another lot of students.

Growth

Journey

Crowdedness of
boarding



I took it of a vacuum because I've never seen one like this anywhere but St Joe's. Here we are always cleaning... and teamwork, and everyone having their fair load. You work with other people and you help them.

Helping
Community
Teamwork/contributing



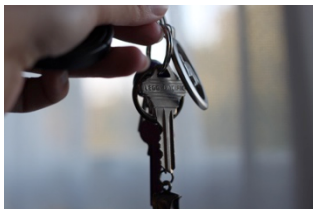
The phone. I suppose it's your line to home, especially in junior school... it's your only... if you don't send mail often it's your only connection to home. It can be pretty busy too, people lining up.

Connection
Family



It looks kind of scary and for most people, um, boarding school is quite scary. 'Cause, you know, you're locked inside, the alarms come on, you know? It can be quite scary. But for us it's just a natural part of life now. And it's a safety, too.

Protection
Being kept safe



The keys... the keys... Keys for me are, like, a sign of, like, 'Whatever you are doing, you better be doing the right thing!' Here you can hear the keys jingling and it's like, 'Hide, hide, hide' or like, 'Put it away!' Yeah. That's what those keys mean.

Being watched

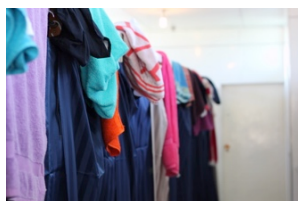
Doing the right thing



These are new learning words. How to learn new words in Māori but this is showing how even outside of class, I still find space for learning.

Learning

Commitment to
learning



That's the showers... This was after school. Just, I don't know... communal living... how you have to wait your turn... there's more than one towel on the showers 'cause... that's like the "line." Yeah, your towel is your territory! Yeah, your reserve! And if someone gets in your shower? Ooh... not good. There was actually a girl earlier this year who kicked a hole in the wall 'cause someone took her shower... [Giggling.] She's gone now... You don't break the towel code! [Laughter.]

Communal living

Community



It's kind of like a routine we have, every morning. We go in and brush our teeth. And to be honest, at home, I'm not like... [Laughter.]

As strict hey! 'Cause it's like catch-up time hey!

Have your sing-along... [Laughter.]

It's your morning news! [Laughter.]

I remember, when I was a junior, like... do you guys have that person, your morning buddy to go brush your teeth with?

Yes!

Yeah, it's like you wake up and say, 'Come on, it's time to go brush our teeth!'

'We'll use your toothpaste up, then we'll use mine...' [Lots of laughter.]

Friendship

Sisterhood

Routine



That's me, at the gym, in the window, so... I remember thinking, like, the first time it was kapa haka and I was running I was like, "Oh my God, look how big I am!" or something like that... Even when we perform for kapa haka we go into the mirrors and we look at each other, like in our kakahu, it's really cool.

Growth

Pride



We're here to study and get a good education so that... like, we're looking forward to a better future. Yeah, on a certain pathway that we want to take. Dedication.

Dedication to studies

Working for a better future

Study



As a junior, I hated waking up at 6 o'clock! Every time I would wake up five minutes before 6, 'Oh no... we've only got five more minutes... Oh, I better get up.' And so the bleep would go at 6. It reminded me of having to wake up all the time, at that time.

Restrictions and rules

Routine



I just wanted to show that there's always somewhere we can sit down and think. As a junior I remember sitting at this table, getting a growling for sitting at this table! [Laughter.] But this was really important to me; this table is where I could... think.

Time alone

Growth



Study. Study is a big part of hostel. Because, especially as you become a senior it's like 24/7, you know. That's a picture of a chair and books, how we, always pretty much sitting down at a desk with like stacked up books and stuff, always doing our work... day in, day out, pretty much. Yeah, the life. Hashtag! [Laughter.]

Study

Working hard for a
good education



That one's girls making their way to study, like, a whole mob going to one place. [Laughter.] Kind of like dairy farms. The cows! At, like, a certain time of the day cows just go to the shed. Like students know [laughter], they just go together [laughter].

Routine

Community



They are looking at a picture of the kapa haka in 1986. They both have relatives in that picture, one has her mum, and the other her aunty... I'm trying to capture two generations, at this school. It's connections. Everyone. 'Oh my mum went to school with your mum!' [Laughter.] Even a few teachers came here. Personally I think it's really cool. When I first saw a photo of my mum here I was like, 'Wow! Whoa, they had hairdos like that?' [Laughter.] So, like, I think it was cool but far out, I was buzzing out. The whole school history, eyes on you. We have house groups and kapa haka, cross-country... although it's competitive, it's cool to bond. My mum came here, and she was prefect of HineMarie, and she was like, that's it! Really proud.

Family

Connection

School history

Whānau whanui



It's kind of showing, sometimes, honestly we are like, "Oh my God I want to be out", but that time you are actually looking at the school, so you are dreading like, "Oh my God, I'm going back to school," like after the holidays... It's definitely pros and cons, ups and downs. Like, "I'm happy I'm back... but I'm not..."

Feeling trapped



This is the chapel, from the road. It's a big part of this school and we are there every Sunday and most times of the week. That's where it all begins. When I finish I'll look back at this place that I saw on my first day.

It's showing when we are finished here, we will continue on elsewhere.

Catholic faith

Journey



This is near the chapel. Dame Whina Cooper... These people have been to this school. All have helped out at this school.

Whānau whanui

History of the school
Mana wāhine/strength



Our chapel is kind of like marae style, the same kind of idea, how we have both, like with the stations of the cross.

Culture and Catholic

Combining Catholic
faith



*We're two different colours but despite your differences here... equality.
There's equality here.*

Equality, Connection

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